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THE BRITISH RAJ AND ITS INDIAN ARMED FORCES 1857–1939

EDITED BY
PARTHA SARATHI GUPTA
ANIRUDH DESHPANDE

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The British Raj and its Indian Armed Forces 1857–1939

This book deals with the history of the colonial military apparatus as it evolved from the years of the 1857 Revolt to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Focusing on the crucial elements of the British military system in India, their governing ideologies and organizational set-up, the essays address some of the major issues connected with the Indian Army and cover three broad themes—questions of identity, the constitution of a corporate body responsible for the security of the Raj in India, and the debate on the devolution of power to Indians.

The articles highlight various aspects of military history such as recruitment policy, ideology, Indianization, and financial reforms. Based on original research and invaluable primary sources, this collection of essays provides an understanding of changing colonial control over India. It would be useful to scholars of modern Indian history, specialists of military history, officers of the Indian Armed Forces, and the general reader.

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York
Auckland Bangkok Buenos Aires Cape Town Chennai
Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi
Sao Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto

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Published in India
By Oxford University Press, New Delhi

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First published 2002

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ISBN 0 19 565805 1

Typeset in Sabon
by Excellent Laser Typesetters, Pitampura, Delhi 110 034
Printed at Rashtriya Printers, Delhi 110 032
Published by Manzar Khan, Oxford University Press
YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001

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1

Introduction

Anirudh Deshpande

In the last quarter century the history of war and society has become a major area of interest to scholars of South Asia. As with other themes, the boundaries between the 'pre-colonial'[1], 'colonial', and the 'post-colonial'[2] histories are becoming blurred here. At the same time there has been a shift from the old-fashioned 'military history' to seeing the armed forces as part of larger societies.[3]

The present volume addresses some of the major issues connected with the Indian army for the years from the 1857 Revolt to the outbreak of the Second World War. This was an important period, when institutions of governance in British India, which had been constructed somewhat hastily in response to fast-changing situations, were put on firmer bases in terms of investment and ideology. The armies of the three Presidencies coalesced into the Indian Army, with an enlarged British component, often working in tandem with British Army contingents. For over 80 years there was no echo of the 1857 mutinies. The policy of conquest being officially declared as ended, Indian regiments were deployed not so much within the country as to defend weak frontiers but to underpin British imperial interests elsewhere in Asia and Africa. The institutions of the Raj were under increasingly persistent scrutiny by an articulate Indian public, which demanded both a greater share in these institutions at the decision-making level, as well as

ultimate freedom from their involuntary membership of the British empire. The Second World War was the last one in which Indian soldiers fought for a British cause. Soon after it ended, things moved towards the partition of the Empire in India and of its armed forces.

Three broad themes of modern Indian history, which are reflected in the history of the armed forces, can be enumerated—questions of identity, the constitution of a corporate body responsible for the security of the Raj in India as well as the Raj of India, and the debate on the devolution of power to Indians.

I

In these decades the British and, following them, the Indians themselves were defining the people of the subcontinent in terms of community, caste and nation. These were not just civilian concerns, but were also reflected in discussions on the composition of the army. The 'objectification of India' which was 'most directly visible in the institutional domains of revenue policy and legal practice'[4] was also powerfully evident in the official discussions on and the recruitment preferences for the army. In the early nineteenth century, while the ethnographers were taking the four-varna 'system' as a given, the army was recruiting not just a large number of Rajputs (who could be categorized as Kshatriyas) but also Brahmins.[5] This led to a belief that there were those in India who were made of soldierly material, and others who were not. Chandar Sundaram's essay in this collection discusses how this was elaborated into a classification of 'martial races' and others, a categorization that cut across varna and community. Many groups who might have made good soldiers were disqualified simply because they had been defiant. The price they paid was to be given the arbitrary—and permanent—label of 'criminal tribes'. The north Indian soldiers who had mutinied in 1857 were also in disgrace. After 1857, the most favoured region was Punjab. This most recently conquered region, with a ready-to-use militarized peasantry, became the major recruiting-ground for the army—as is elaborated by Tan Tai Yong.

For the rest, the list of 'martial races' was flexible enough to permit additions, particularly in times of need, as in 1914 and 1939—discussed below by Ashima Kaul. Over time, the categories came to be internalized by Indians, and the 'martial races' became the new Kshatriyas, and enlisting in the army became a family tradition. In 1947 the army's main reservoir was partitioned and martial Punjabi Muslims faced martial Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs across a new frontier. The self-image of the 'martial races' had its mirror-image in the unhappiness of those who were beyond the pale and could perhaps explain the Bengalis' obsession with martial prowess, the attraction of 'revolutionary nationalism' and the near-idolization of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Perceptions of identity also influenced the organization of the army to a degree that was unnecessary in a civilian society. In the small world of the cantonment, every aspect of the soldier's life was regulated,[6] and rank and hierarchy was all-important.[7]

So also was the soldier's self-perception—while at one level he was part of the large corporate body of the army, at another he retained a disconcertingly strong sense of *jati* identity and language affiliation. There were instances of tension over details of messing and of uniforms, tensions noted and 'respected' by the British officers (who could forget what had triggered off 1857?). In the interests of intra-regimental harmony and inter-regimental balance, 'class' (read 'caste') regiments were substituted for mixed ones (see Ashima Kaul's essay). Handbooks of the Indian army, written specifically for the officers, described the features, temperaments, and the habitats of different jatis. This 'objectification' fostered a one-way sensibility which strengthened the symbiotic ties between the two 'races'. 'Loyalty' bound the 200,000 Indian *jawans* (a significant semantic change from 'sepoy's) to the 7000 British officers communicating in Hindustani—the military 'language of command'[8]—as in earlier centuries they had been linked to their clan-leaders. Both races knew that the loyalty of the soldiers was not unconditional. The army was the largest official employer, recruiting 20,000 Indians every year. But these were volunteers, not conscripts. Therefore, apart from the scrupulous respect for caste sensibilities, there had to be the assurance of regular

salaries, uniforms, and perquisites. This is the theme of Kaushik Roy's essay. Pensions and land grants had been given since the 1820s, and after 1857 'welfare' measures were seen as an essential strategy to avert unrest. These were periodically augmented, till the severe financial constraints after the first World War made further concessions impossible.

II

It is by now a truism that the colonial state was not a monolith, any more than there was a 'colonial mind'.[9] The army was a department of government, but it was a state within a state in a way the police or education or revenue departments could not be. The dominant voices are not those of civilians but, as narrated by Chander Sundaram, of forceful army commanders like Field-Marshal Frederick Roberts. There were flashpoints, of which the better-known ones are the clash between Governor General Dalhousie and Sir Charles Napier in 1850, and the defiance of Viceroy Curzon by the Commander-in-Chief Lord Kitchener in 1903–4. The underlying tension between the civilian and military branches of the state do not come across in general political histories. One also comes to realize that the debates that occurred in Britain over questions of defence expenditure had parallels in British India.

Britain's army was modernized in the 1870s, an indirect result of the Franco-Prussian War (the 'Cardwell Reforms'). Proposals for similar improvements were urged in India in 1879, in the wake of the disastrous Second Afghan War, and again in 1919, during a sobering appraisal of the 'Mesopotamia Muddle' and the Afghanistan campaign. But, as shown by Anirudh Deshpande, this was followed by the Retrenchment Committee, which advised massive cutbacks and thus put paid to all proposals for modernization.

III

Books on modern India have diligently examined the debates about giving Indians a greater share in policy-making in the

legislature and administration. A third area, equally important, was the army. Indian nationalist rhetoric frequently criticized the government for the cost (30 per cent of the total expenditure) of keeping an army which was being used chiefly to fight Britain's imperial battles elsewhere; this was exclusive of the cost of the British garrison in India, also paid from Indian revenues, until 1933. Some of the same nationalists at the same time wanted a share in the senior positions in the army. Field-Marshal Roberts, the powerful Commander-in-Chief, could never agree that this was possible. No Indian could command British soldiers (this was not long after the Ilbert Bill controversy). 'The force of leadership is an attribute of race.' He was prepared to promote deserving soldiers of the 'martial races' but none from the 'babu' class. Roberts' arguments, and the counter-proposals of George Chesney, Military Secretary, were to be repeated in the 1920s, but with one important difference. As analysed by Partha Sarathi Gupta, this time it was between the Britons and the Indians, during the debate on 'Indianization'. Another important difference was that the reasons for the conservative stand had changed—government officials and army officers were now afraid that Indians might be attracted to the new Communist ideology and therefore not be reliable. The Skeen Committee on 'Indianization' did a great deal of work, but all of it ran aground on the rocks of racial prejudice and imperialist fears. As with the larger constitutional issues, the concessions made in the 1930s fell far short of Indian aspirations.

The last order of the Indian Army was given in 1947 and the Raj passed into history. But for historians, the vast corpus of material in archives, museums, and libraries in the subcontinent and elsewhere remains a rich field to explore. The days of studying 'military history' in isolation are over. The articles in this book point to many directions for future research-questions of identities, as understood by non-Indians and by Indians themselves; the share of defence in national expenditure; the training and ideology imparted to soldiers; the relations between the civilian society and the armed forces. Such investigations will develop a nuanced understanding of the colonial state, its predecessors and its successors which is urgently needed.

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2

Sepoys and the Colonial State: Punjab and the Military Base of the Indian Army 1849–1900

Tan Tai Yong

Introduction

The identification of local collaborating groups, or indigenous allies, and their incorporation into the structures of colonial rule was an essential strategy adopted by European rulers in their subjugation and control of non-European societies. Of the different types of collaborating groups—ruling classes, landlords, and merchants—the most important were those that served in the imperial armed forces, given that military power was often the underpinning of the creation and maintenance of imperial authority. This being the case, recruiting strategies adopted by imperial rulers, to identify and absorb local military allies into the ranks of their native armies were usually of crucial importance.

The case in colonial India was a prime example. The creation of the British Indian Empire, and its subsequent garrisoning, were achieved largely with Indian manpower. Initially, the East India Company recruited for their armed forces from within the vicinity in which they first established their foothold in the subcontinent. But by the nineteenth century, as the armed forces of the East India Company grew in size and became better

organized, distinct military labour markets emerged in different parts of the empire from the Gangetic plains in the north to the Carnatic in the south. The three presidency armies—Madras, Bombay and Bengal—had, by the nineteenth century, developed their respective catchment areas of military manpower. The Madras Army's recruiting ground included most of south India, and from there a diversity of groups—Malabaris, Guntars, Rajputs, Muslims, and Tamils—provided its mainstay.[1] The Bombay Army, like the Madras Army, was composed of recruits from a wide variety of social and religious backgrounds. But it too had its particular recruiting grounds, and its overwhelming bulk comprised Hindustanis from the Gangetic plains and Konkanis.[2] The Bengal Army, unlike its two southern counterparts, was more restrictive in its choice of recruits. To start with, the militarized north Indian peasantry provided a rich source of manpower from which the Bengal Army could pick and choose the 'handsomest and cleanest looking men'.[3] High-caste Rajputs and Brahmins, taking advantage of their elevated status, started to dominate posts in the regiments, at the expense of lower castes. As a result, by the middle of the nineteenth century, regiments of the Bengal Army consisted almost entirely of high-caste Rajputs and Brahmins from Rohilkhand, Oudh, and Bihar.[4]

But within a period of less than fifty years, by the end of the nineteenth century, the picture had changed. The old recruiting grounds of the Company had virtually been replaced by one main source of manpower for the British Indian Army.[5] By about 1900, slightly more than half the combatants of the native regiments were recruited from the region known as Greater Punjab[6] in north-western India.

What brought about this dramatic inversion in the recruiting pattern of the colonial armed forces in India, from the utilization of a wide, diverse range to an eventual concentration in the Punjab? To the extent that the values of local military allies were defined in the context of imperial security and strategic considerations, the composition of the native army in India underwent changes as British threat perceptions shifted in the second half of the nineteenth century, from the Mutiny and Rebellion in 1857 to the 'Great Game' against Russia thereafter. The changes in the composition of the native army, and the consequent contraction of the recruiting grounds in India, were

the result of the re-selection by the British of their military allies in India. This chapter aims to provide an account of the gradual opening of the Punjab as the principal military labour market in India for the armies of the British in the second half of the nineteenth century in the context of changes in the structure and organization of the Indian Army.

Annexation and Demilitarization

With the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 a potentially rich recruiting ground in the north-west of India was laid open for the regular native infantry and cavalry regiments of the Bengal Army. The period of Sikh rule in the Punjab had seen the transformation of the region's highly militarized peasantry[7] into a veritable military labour market, supplying the Sikh army of Ranjit Singh. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century the Sikh Army—organized, equipped, and trained along western lines—provided a major source of employment for the peasantry of the Punjab. The groups incorporated into the military were the erstwhile military followers of the Sikh confederacies, Muslim tribesmen from western Punjab, Hindu Jat peasants from the east, and the Sikh peasantry of central Punjab.[8] The death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 brought about a succession crisis at the Punjab court, and in the absence of a strong successor, the Sikh army emerged as the most powerful arbiter in Punjabi politics.[9] During this period, the strength of the army increased from about 80,000 in 1839 to 123,000 in 1844.[10] Eventually, the political deterioration caused by the internecine feuding and factional in-fighting, and the increasing menace of the Sikh army, prompted the British to intervene. After the first Anglo-Sikh war in 1846, the eastern part of the Sikh kingdom, the trans-Sutlej territories of Jullunder and Hoshiarpur were annexed, and in the process, a portion of the Sikh military labour market was opened to the British. This was duly exploited by the British, who had been impressed by the fighting qualities of the Sikhs, and in 1847 two regiments of Sikh infantry, the Ferozepur and Ludhiana regiments, were raised. In the same year the famous Guides Corps of Lieutenant Harry Lumsden was formed, comprising mainly Sikhs from the

annexed region.[11] The rest of the Punjab was still dominated by the old Sikh army, but not for long. In 1849 a revolt of the Sikhs in Multan sparked off the second Anglo-Sikh War, which eventually led to the final defeat of the Sikhs and the annexation of the entire Punjab. Together with the acquisition of the erstwhile Sikh kingdom, the British inherited the remnants of the once all-powerful military force in the Punjab, some 60,000 soldiers, mostly Sikhs, who had been disbanded and thrown out of employment.

The presence of such a large force of unemployed soldiers, amidst a potentially volatile population, at the point of annexation posed a problem for the then Governor General, Lord Dalhousie. It was tempting to allow the Bengal Army to exploit this available source of manpower, to wean it away from its dependence on the north-central military labour market. Furthermore, the Sikhs had been trained by Europeans, and could easily be incorporated into the Bengal Army. However, the Governor General had serious misgivings about having Punjabis, especially the Sikhs, back in arms again so soon after they had been defeated. He was anxious to pacify the newly annexed region and to lay the foundation for a stable civil government and the rapid development of the province; but he was only too aware that before all that could be achieved, the Sikhs had first to be demilitarized. He took the view that the 'Sikhs, a people warlike in character and long accustomed to conquest, must of necessity detest the British',[12] and as long as they were held in subjugation, they would welcome any opportunity to again wage war against the British. As he saw it, 'There will never be peace in the Punjab so long as its people are allowed to maintain the means and the opportunity of making war'.[13] Dalhousie was therefore determined to render the Sikhs submissive and harmless, and he sought to achieve this by depriving them of the means of resistance and facilities for war.[14] John Lawrence, a member of the newly constituted Board of Administration, and later Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, shared his Governor General's fears. He stated: 'I do not like to raise large bodies of old Sikhs...I recollect their strong nationalities...and how much they have to gain by our ruin'.[15]

Within six weeks of annexation, backed by the presence of a strong coercive force of 50,000 soldiers of the Bengal Army,

the Governor General accordingly ordered the Board of Administration to push ahead with the task of disbanding the erstwhile Sikh Army. He further instructed his Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) General Sir Hugh Gough, to take steps to disarm this 'turbulent population while they are still disheartened and in fear of punishment'.[16] A proclamation was issued to confiscate all arms; possession of gunpowder and arms of all description was made illegal and offenders were threatened with heavy punishment. Consequently, more than 120,000 weapons of all sorts, ranging from daggers to matchlocks, were confiscated in the Punjab.[17] A general muster of Sikh soldiers was subsequently called at Lahore, where nearly 50,000 soldiers of the former Sikh army were paid off and disbanded. Military strongholds throughout the province, except those which were needed by the new British administration for military and political purposes, were dismantled.[18]

The disbandment of the old Sikh army was carried out for the security of the British in the province, but at the same time Dalhousie was aware that it was politically injudicious to leave several thousands of ex-soldiers without employment. The general policy of demilitarization notwithstanding, he decided to make use of the Sikhs and Punjabis to control the newly created north-western frontier of the Indian empire. The annexation of the Punjab had extended the empire's geographical and political frontier in the west to be roughly coterminous on the north-west frontier, and brought the British in contact with the troublesome and warlike Pathan tribes. The policing of this newly created 800-mile frontier, an area with a trying climate and difficult terrain, had initially been entrusted to locally raised horse and foot levies and police battalions.[19] Aware that the annexation of the Punjab had created a new military situation, Dalhousie decided to recruit Punjabis for service at the frontier. This had two obvious advantages. On the one hand this would provide some employment for the disbanded Sikh soldiers and other Punjabis, and on the other, the irregular regiments at the frontier would have soldiers who were better adapted to the terrain and climate. Accordingly, in 1849 the Board of Administration was empowered to raise ten regiments of Punjabis—five cavalry and five infantry—to form the Punjab Irregular Frontier Force, to replace the levies and police battalions. It was originally

intended that these irregular regiments, each of which would consist of four European officers, sixteen native officers, and 900 native sepoys, be filled with Punjabis. The Board laid down the guideline that the regiments were to be constituted in the following proportion: 50 per cent Punjabis, mainly Muslims and hillmen, 25 per cent Sikhs, and 25 per cent Hindustanis.[20] Despite these guidelines, the regiments which were eventually constituted were dominated by Hindustanis and trans-Indus Pathans. Local commanders, still unsure if the Sikhs could be trusted, restricted the number of Sikhs in their regiments, while attempts to fill the Punjab quota were unsuccessful because of the unwillingness of other classes of Punjabis, for reasons not specified, to enlist for military service.[21]

The lid on the recruitment of Punjabis into the regular corps of the Bengal Army was officially lifted in 1851, when army authorities in India decided that it was safe enough. But they were quick to add the proviso that Sikh should not be allowed to exceed 200 per regiment or about 20 per cent its strength.[22] Although this measure was welcomed by some commanders of the native infantry regiments of the Bengal Army, some of whom had boasted of enlisting 'a hundred or more fine Sikhs who had fought against us in every battle in both campaigns'[23] it did not become popular. Many commanding officers of the Bengal regiments, influenced perhaps by opposition from their high-caste recruits, kept the Sikhs away from their corps. Many were quite unwilling to enlist Sikhs into their regiments because they felt that there was 'too much of the leaven of insubordination in the Sikh Army to make the sepoy ranks fitting places for the old *Khalsa*'.[24] They were worried too that there would be problems from mixing the Sikhs, who were notorious for their laxity in caste observances, with the high-caste Hindu sepoys from Oudh and Rohilkhand, who despised the Sikhs as 'untidy and dirty', and were not permitted to associate with them. In his memoirs, Sita Ram, a Rajput sepoy from Oudh who had served in the Bengal Army in the campaigns in the Punjab, mentioned the difficulties faced by the older sepoys when two battalions of Sikhs were enlisted into his regiment after the Sikh wars.[25] He mentioned that the older Hindustani sepoys regarded the Sikh soldiers as 'interlopers' and were not permitted to associate with them.[26] Nevertheless, by 1851 some Sikhs and Punjabis did

manage to get recruited into the regular regiments of the Bengal Army serving in the Punjab. But the recommendation to include up to 200 Sikhs per regiment was largely ignored by commanders of regiments of the Bengal Army. In the 1850s, it was observed that no more than ten Sikhs were usually found in each infantry regiment of the Bengal Army.[27] Consequently of the nearly 60,000 Sikhs that were thrown out of employment following the defeat of the Sikh army, not more than 3000 had found a place in the seventy-four infantry regiments of the Bengal Army by the early 1850s.[28]

For the first few years after annexation, the Punjab thus remained on the fringe of the colonial army in India. A general, policy of demilitarization of the province, coupled with the reluctance of the Bengal Army to look beyond its established recruiting grounds for manpower, precluded Punjabis from entering the ranks of the colonial army in any significant numbers. Since no changes were envisaged for the Bengal Army, now settled into its role as an occupying force in the Punjab and Sind, there was no need for the British to look for new recruiting grounds.

This state of affairs was, however, to change with the Mutiny in the Bengal Army in 1857. The Mutiny had tremendous impact on the thinking of military authorities in India, particularly with regard to the structure and role of the colonial army; it had shown up the weaknesses of the prevailing military set-up in India, and the threats it posed to the security of the Raj. The 1857 uprising brought in its wake a new military arrangement in northern India, one in which the Punjab began to play a bigger part. The following section shows how the crisis of empire compelled the British to turn to the Punjab for military manpower, and how this was to eventually determine the form of the post-mutiny reconstruction of the Bengal Army.

The Punjab and the 1857 Rebellion

On 10 May 1857, the 11th and 20th Bengal Native Infantry Regiments and the 3rd Light Cavalry stationed in Meerut cantonment broke out into mutiny, murdered their European officers, and flocked southwards to Delhi. Within twenty-four

hours, news had spread of the successful capture of the old imperial capital of Delhi by the sepoys from Meerut and the proclamation of Bahadur Shah II as the Emperor of Hindustan. What followed was an almost spontaneous outburst of military uprisings and civil rebellion that quickly engulfed most of north-central India, from Delhi to northern Bihar. The conflagration, sparked off by the mutiny in Meerut, was to last more than a year, until June 1858, when the last of the rebel strongholds in Gwalior finally fell to British troops.

The Rebellion of 1857 highlighted the political vulnerability and military fragility of an imperial power whose authority was underpinned by an alien mercenary army. The British empire in India had been acquired by military conquests, and it was largely upon the continued possession and monopoly of military might that imperial power and authority in the subcontinent were predicated. But in India, the shortage of European manpower had compelled imperial authorities to rely on local mercenaries for their armed forces. As a result, European troops, which were stationed in the subcontinent as praetorian guards of the British Raj, were perpetually, and hopelessly, outnumbered by their native counterparts. The military and political repercussions of such a military arrangement were dramatically highlighted in 1857: when the native regiments of the Bengal Army mutinied, the British found themselves almost immediately shorn of their military power in northern India and British authority in north-central India consequently ceased to exist.

The mutiny in Meerut in May 1857 had evidently caught the British unawares. This was surprising given that just before the outbreak at Meerut, there had been clear symptoms of disquiet amongst the native regiments of the Bengal Army. In 1850, the 66th Native Infantry Regiment stationed in Barrackpore, a cantonment near Calcutta, mutinied over the decision by the military authorities to withdraw compensatory allowances for services in the newly conquered territory of Punjab. Service in the remote and unfamiliar territory of the Punjab had never been popular with the sepoys from the North Western Province and Oudh and, in the past, Hindustani sepoys stationed in the Punjab had been compensated by extra service allowances. However, with annexation, the Punjab was no longer considered foreign territory and the extra allowance for foreign service

was consequently withdrawn.[29] The C-in-C, Sir Charles Napier, had the regiment disbanded as an example to the rest of the army but even he had sensed that the event was a symptom of deep-seated malady.

From the 1850s, grievances amongst the sepoys of the Bengal Army had been mounting, caused largely by growing dissatisfaction with service conditions. This was heightened by the General Service Act of 1856, which decreed that all sepoys, irrespective of caste, would in future be liable for overseas service. For high-caste recruits from north-central India, this ruling was abhorrent, as the crossing of the dreaded 'black waters' meant a loss of caste. Consequently, many high-caste Rajputs and Brahmins chose not to enlist, and in so doing lost a lucrative source of employment. There was also the belief, amongst high-caste Brahmin and Rajput sepoys of Benares and Oudh, that their favoured position in the Bengal Army was being threatened by the intention of the British to expand their recruiting base to include a wider range of castes and regional groups. The opening of the Punjab and permission to recruit up to 200 Sikhs per regiment, although as has been seen not fully exploited by British commanders of the Bengal Army, was perceived by these sepoys as an indication that their monopoly of military service, crucial for their economic well-being, was being threatened. These fears were compounded by grievances over the loss of foreign service in Oudh (1846) and Punjab (1849).[30] The conditions were certainly ripe for a sepoy revolt in the Bengal Army. After his resignation as C-in-C Napier had warned, perhaps prophetically, that the entire Bengal Army was on the verge of mutiny.

The spark that ignited the tense situation was provided by the introduction of the controversial greased cartridges for the Lee-Enfield rifles used by the sepoys. Rumours that these cartridges were to be greased with cow and pork fat caused consternation amongst Hindu and Muslim sepoys both on religious grounds.[31] The belief that the British were deliberately trying to pollute the soldiers in order to convert them to Christianity agitated the soldiers and in parades sepoys began openly to defy orders to handle these cartridges. But British commanders, believing that their sepoys were incapable of mutiny, chose to interpret their defiance as a minor problem of insubordination,

rather than ominous warning. Consequently, when the mutiny erupted and spread across northern India the British were caught off balance and could momentarily do nothing to scotch it.

After recovering from their initial shock, as the British took stock of the situation, it was clear that their position was indeed critical. At the outbreak of the mutiny, the only force immediately available to the British was 23,000 European troops of the Bengal Army, about half of whom were stationed in the Punjab; reinforcements from England would take more than half a year to arrive, possibly too late to be of any use, and even if they did arrive in good time, the inhospitable climate of India in May would render most of them ineffective before they could be pitted against the mutineers.[32] The British were chary of rushing up native troops from the Madras and Bombay armies, unsure if they too had mutinous tendencies. For the moment, therefore, the only immediate option open to the British was to regroup and consolidate the European regiments in northern India. As the bulk of these forces were stationed in the Punjab, the tasks of consolidating the British position and organizing the counter-attack against the mutinous sepoys to regain northern India, therefore fell on the province, particularly on the shoulders of John Lawrence, its Chief Commissioner.

The task confronting John Lawrence and his fellow British officers in the Punjab were daunting. Although there had been no spontaneous outbreaks of rebellion in the Punjab, the situation in the province was far from secure. The population had remained subdued, but officials believed that it was 'watching developments with strained attention', very possibly waiting for the right moment to break out into open rebellion. On the north-western border, the menacing presence of hostile tribesmen was another cause for concern. The turbulent frontier had been kept under careful watch by the Frontier Force, but should the Force be weakened by mutiny or desertions, the situation would become untenable. Furthermore, at the outbreak of the mutiny, there was a fairly substantial force of 36,000 armed and potentially mutinous Hindustani troops stationed in the Punjab itself, which needed overawing, and ii possible, overpowering.

With the troops at hand, comprising twelve regiments of Europeans, numbering 10,326 men, and the 13,430 Punjabi

Irregulars from Punjab Frontier Force, which had remained steadfast, Lawrence took action to prevent insurrection from erupting from within the Punjab. He immediately set about securing strategic installations and disarming the Hindustani sepoys. European troops were despatched to secure Lahore, with its fort and arsenal,[33] the arsenal at Ferozepur, which contained 7000 barrels of gunpowder and a large armoury of weapons, and the strategically important forts of Phillaur and Govindgarh in central Punjab.[34] Having secured some of the key installations in the Punjab, the authorities next turned their attention to the Hindustani forces present in the Punjab. The Chief Commissioner ordered that regiments whose loyalty was suspect be disarmed, and, consequently, prompt and firm action by local commanders and their civil counterparts, particularly in Amritsar, Lahore, Multan, and Jhelum secured the peaceful disarming of eighteen native infantry and cavalry regiments, a total of over 13,000 men.[35] Native gunners of artillery batteries were removed from their guns, and their places taken over by volunteers from the European force.[36]

Not all the native regiments capitulated so easily. Several resisted the attempts to disarm them, mutinied, and tried to rush to Delhi to join forces with the other mutineers. Between May and August 1857, during the continuance of the siege in Delhi, on eight separate occasions, indeed, twelve regiments of Hindustani troops mutinied in the Punjab.[37] Most of the mutineers were, however, resolutely put down by British troops; of the eight cases of mutiny, all but three were beaten and destroyed.

While Lawrence and his officers were attempting to consolidate their position in the Punjab, urgent calls came from Delhi for reinforcements. The old Mughal capital of Delhi had fallen to the mutineers on 10 May, and its recapture soon became an objective of extreme urgency, if only for prestige purposes. In July a contingent from the Punjab comprising twelve European regiments, the Guides, 4th Sikhs, 1st Punjab Infantry, 1st Punjab Cavalry, and two squadrons of the 2nd and 5th Punjab Cavalry were dispatched to Delhi to reinforce the troops already there.[38] Despite the reinforcements, the situation in Delhi remained critical; by August death and sickness had thinned the ranks of the British forces at Delhi, while the numbers of mutineers had

been swollen by reinforcements from other parts of northern India.[39] General Arthur Wilson, Commanding Officer of the Delhi Field Force, wrote to the Chief Commissioner that unless reinforcements were sent from the Punjab, the troops in Delhi would not be able to hold their position, much less assault the city.[40]

The call from Delhi put the Chief Commissioner in a quandary. Punjab was not totally free from trouble and required all its available troops to protect the frontier and watch and guard the Hindustani troops, of whom nearly 6000 were still armed. Some of his colleagues, notably Herbert Edwardes, urged Lawrence to secure the Punjab first, arguing that '[it] will serve the empire better by holding the Punjab than by sacrificing [it] and recovering Delhi'.[41] Despite such exhortations and the continuing uncertainty of his own position in the Punjab, Lawrence decided to despatch reinforcements to Delhi. The Chief Commissioner feared that a retreat of the troops from Delhi would be disastrous for the morale of the native regiments, which in turn would have adverse effect on the fidelity of Punjabi troops in the Punjab itself, making the hold over the Punjab impossible.[42] Unwilling to use the Hindustani regiments that had already been disarmed and confined to the barracks in the Punjab, the Chief Commissioner was compelled to turn to the Punjab itself to raise fresh forces to secure the positions of the British in the Punjab and, at the same time, to augment the Delhi Field Force.

By the middle of 1857, when authorities in the Punjab were convinced that the Punjabis did not sympathize with the movement in the east, calls were sent out to raise the requisite number of men to augment the Punjab Force. Between May and December 1857, a new force of approximately 34,000 Punjabis was raised, which included eighteen new regiments of infantry, a body of 300 veteran Sikh artillerymen, re-enlisted after being disbanded in 1849, and a corp of about 1200 low-caste Sikh pioneers.[43] The nucleus of this force comprised the Sikh and Punjabi Muslim elements of disarmed infantry regiments of the Bengal Army, which the Punjab authorities believed would not empathize with the Hindustani mutineers.[44] In addition, irregular levies numbering 7000 horse and 9000 foot were raised to replace the Punjab regiments sent to Delhi, to keep a

watch on the Hindustani elements in the Punjab, and to quell disaffection wherever it might arise.[45]

In 1857, the crisis of empire had necessitated the raising of a large body of troops from the Punjab, which a few years before had been undergoing a process of gradual demilitarization. The military tradition of the Punjabis, which the British had hitherto been trying to dampen, was rekindled; Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, and Dogras, who had constituted the mainstay of the Sikh military machinery before annexation, were called back to arms, this time in defence of the empire.

There was, nonetheless, considerable official misgiving about the return to arms of this potentially turbulent population. Lawrence, for example, had initially been reluctant to authorize the raising of Sikh troops, being still distrustful of them.[46] Although British rhetoric at that time spoke of the Punjabis' 'splendid and noble response to the call of duty', there were no real illusions that the Punjabis had responded to the British call out of a sense of loyalty.[47] The Punjab had been secured by tough and resolute actions of the civil and military authorities; the Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims had turned to the service of the British lured mainly by the opportunity to plunder the wealth of Delhi, and hoping to have a share of the largesse when the crisis was over. Furthermore, there was the hope that the British would reopen the Punjab as a military recruiting ground, the prospects of which would provide a golden opportunity for Punjabis, especially the Sikhs, to restore their shattered fortunes. But doubts lingered in the minds of the British. The Chief Commissioner noted, when the chances of victory were slim, that these mercenaries would in all probability join the enemy, and 'think how he can best shift for himself'.[48] It was believed that the Muslims were still imbued with fanaticism, and were secretly impatient of British rule, and that when they believed that British rule was drawing to an end, they would rise and strike. Similarly, the Sikhs, it was believed, still harboured resentment because of their recent defeat by British forces; there were fears by the British that the present crisis would provide a good opportunity for the Sikhs to attempt to revive the *Khalsa*.[49] The Chief Commissioner accordingly decided to proceed with caution in the matter of recruiting, and to enlist no more men than were absolutely necessary to hold the Punjab

and supply reinforcements to Delhi. He also made sure, in a manner reminiscent of Ranjit Singh's army some decades before, not to allow a preponderance of any one particular group in the force. Consequently, the composition of the new force came to be a mixed one, comprising Sikhs from the central Punjab, various Muslim tribes from the western Punjab (which had little in common except religion), Pathan and Baluch tribes from the frontier, hillmen, and Punjabi Hindus.[50]

The raising of a Punjab Force, and its subsequent despatch to Delhi, in addition to meeting British manpower needs at a crucial moment, provided the British with an important tactical advantage: it reduced the threat of an internal uprising by Punjabis by drawing in potentially dangerous elements and sending them out of the Punjab. During the Mutiny, there were disturbing signs that some elements in the Punjab were using the crisis to revive old factional disputes,[51] and some of the rival tribes were preparing to reassert their interests, should British rule collapse under the present crisis. Towards the end of May 1857, it was rumoured that clan heads in the Bar tracts of Shahpur district had met secretly to pledge themselves to a common cause of action, should locally cantoned sepoys rise in mutiny.[52] There was also evidence of similar developments amongst the tribes of Jhelum district.[53] There, recruitment to the Punjab Force provided an outlet for the excitable tribes to channelize their restless energy; the raising of a levy of horsemen from Jhelum gave employment to the local spare hands, whose absence for duties elsewhere kept the district relatively quiet.[54] In Shahpur district, the dominant and influential chieftains of the Tiwana tribes were encouraged to raise 1000 horsemen for the levies. Many of those who joined the levies were headmen of villages, often related to the chieftain, and their presence on the side of the British 'afforded an excellent guarantee for the good behaviour of those who remained at home'.[55] But, at the same time, local officials expressed 'great relief' when these horsemen departed for service elsewhere.[56]

The Mutiny of 1857 thus saw the recruitment of large number of Punjabis into the British armed forces in India, a complete reversal of the policy of demilitarization that had been pursued by the Punjab Board of Administration since annexation. In barely six months in 1857, eighteen new regiments of

infantry, comprising more than 34,000 men, were raised in the Punjab. In addition to the 14,000 irregular levies that were raised for services within the Punjab, a total of almost 50,000 Punjabis were put under arms, marking a significant increase in the number of Punjabis in the Bengal Army from the situation in 1851.[57] Punjabis who came on the side of the British during the crisis were rewarded by employment in the colonial army, and for many of them, it promised a return to an association with the military in India.

Yet, in 1858 continued employment for Punjabis in the Army in India was by no means assured. We have seen that, despite being forced by circumstances to depend on Punjabi troops, British authorities were still quite unsure of their loyalties. While it was quite clear that the Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims would have no sympathies for the *purbiya* high-caste Hindus, there were signs, whilst the crisis lasted, of unrest generated by the belief that the end of British rule might just be occurring. British officials, reflecting after the crisis, felt that the Punjab would have risen against them, had the defeat of the mutineers at Delhi been delayed.[58] It was clear that caution still governed the authorities' decision to recruit Punjabis into the ranks of the army. It was not simply a case of providing military employment to the Punjabis as a reward for good and loyal services; rather, the questions persisted: what should be done with the Punjabi regiments that had been called to arms during the Mutiny? Should they be disarmed now that the crisis was over, or was it safe enough, at this stage, to include large numbers of Punjabis in the colonial army? If so, what numbers of Punjabis could safely be recruited into the army, and how would the recruitment of Punjabis serve the interests of the colonial army, and ultimately of British rule in India?

Post-Mutiny Army Reforms

In July 1858 a Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Major General Jonathan Peel, Secretary of State for War, to study the lessons of the Mutiny and to consider and recommend ways of enhancing the security and viability of the armed forces in India.[59] The Commission received testimonies

and evidence from several senior civil servants and military men, all of whom had long experience with the native army in India. On the question of the forces required for the garrisoning of the Indian empire, almost all the witnesses agreed that it was inconceivable for the British Indian empire to be held solely with British or European troops. Not only was European manpower scarce, but the cost of raising and maintaining an all European colonial army in India was prohibitive.[60] Some witnesses suggested that, since the native troops had shown themselves untrustworthy, they should be replaced by mercenaries from outside India, like Africans, Malays, and Chinese.[61] This measure was, however, strongly opposed by John Lawrence, who argued that[62]

> ...there was no necessity of bringing in Muhomedan, Hindoo and Buddhist foreigners from other tropical countries...every foreign coloured soldier that you bring into India displaces an Indian soldier—a soldier by caste and profession, who will take to no other livelihood. What would the advocates of foreign mercenaries propose to do with these displaced military classes? No statesman can ignore them. The wise policy is to feed, use, and control them.

Unable to rely totally on a European army, and unwilling to recruit mercenaries from outside India, the Commission accepted that there was no alternative but to continue to rely on native troops for the garrisoning of the subcontinent. Safeguards, however, had to be introduced to make this overwhelmingly native army 'safe and viable'. The Commission recommended several measures: (a) there should be an increase in the number of European troops stationed in India; (b) the ratio of native troops should not be in a proportion greater to the European in the Cavalry and Infantry than two to one for the Bengal Army and three to one for the Bombay and Madras Armies; and (c) artillery and arsenals should be monopolized by European forces.[63]

Central to the issue of safeguards in the armed forces was the question of the future composition of the native army. The ease with which the Mutiny had spread through the Bengal Army was attributed to the fact that most of the regiments had been composed of men from the same caste and region, with shared affiliations. Most of the witnesses agreed that the reconstructed Bengal Army should be composed of different

'nationalities and castes'; but there was little agreement on the types of soldiers and the proportion of the different 'nationalities and castes' which the army should recruit in future. Some argued that having a wide range of recruits for the army was the safest policy, and that recruitment should be opened to all sections of society, regardless of caste.[64] There were several who disagreed with this open policy, arguing for the exclusion of certain groups. Lieutenant Colonel Mayhew, Adjutant General of the Bengal Army argued, for example, that the events of 1857 had shown that Brahmins could not be trusted and recommended that they be excluded from any future recruitment;[65] Sir George Clerk of Bombay, on the other hand, thought that 'we should be most guarded and watchful with the Sikhs', while Major General Hearsey felt that 'there was no more dangerous man than a religious Mahomedan'.[66] With such contradictory views, all that the Commission was eventually able to recommend was 'that the Native Army should be composed of different nationalities and castes, and as a general rule mixed promiscuously through each regiment'.[67] It did not, however, specify in detail which 'nationalities and castes' were to be recruited, or excluded.

The Commission's recommendation that a wide variety of castes be recruited to the native army shattered the monopoly by high-caste Brahmins and Rajputs of north-central India of the Bengal Army, but it offered no guidelines as to who should be recruited in their place. The post-Mutiny Bengal Army was consequently reconstructed from the establishments still in force in 1858, but its underlying organizational principle was influenced by the strategy of 'divide-and-rule' advocated by John Lawrence, Neville Chamberlain, and Herbert Edwardes, the three members of the Punjab Committee, formed to advise the Peel Commission. The recommendations of the Punjab Committee were based on the logic of making the army safe by the counterpoise of natives against natives. The rationale behind their recommendations was summed up thus:[68]

> To preserve that distinctiveness which is so valuable, and which while it lasts makes the Muhomedan of one country despise, fear, or dislike the Muhomedan of another, corps should in future be provincial, and adhere to geographical limits within which differences and rivalries are strongly marked. Let all races, Hindu and Muhomedan, of one

province be enlisted in one regiment, and no others, and having thus created distinctive regiments, let us keep them so against the hour of need by confining the circle of their ordinary service to the limits of their own province, and only marching them on emergency into other parts of the empire, with which they will then be found to have little sympathy. By the system thus indicated, two great evils are avoided; firstly, that community of feeling throughout the native army, and that mischievous political activity and intrigue which results from association with other races and travel in other Indian provinces, and secondly, that thorough discontent and alienation from the service which has undoubtedly sprung up since extended conquest has carried our Hindustani soldiers so far from their homes in India proper.

The political object of the policy was clear enough: the native army in India should be organized on a principle of 'divide and rule', to prevent it from galvanizing into a unified force capable of threatening British interests again. This policy reflected the concerns of the military authority at the time: the post-Mutiny Indian Army was there to uphold the Raj, and not just for the defence of India. Internal security, was therefore, to be the underlying factor in the way in which the armed forces in India were to be organized. The 'divide and rule' policy was to apply at all levels of the army. At the subcontinental level, it manifested in attempts to keep the three presidency armies segregated and totally unconnected by common interests and sympathies, so that they could function as checks upon each other. The desire to preserve three distinct regional armies explains why, despite the fact that the Bengal Army had all but ceased to exist following the mutiny of more than 80 per cent of its regiments, the military authorities chose to have it reconstructed, instead of abolishing it altogether.

The policy of the Punjab committee also meant that within each army there was to be localization of recruitment and service. This meant that regiments would now be raised strictly within the confines of the area in which they were expected to serve. Making regiments serve in peace time in their own country had two distinct advantages. First, military service nearer home was understandably more popular with the sepoy than service at a distance and in a climate to which he was unaccustomed. One of the major grievances of the Bengal sepoys that contributed to the eventual uprising in 1857 was their reluctance to serve outside their presidency. Having to

leave their homes for extended periods of time, to garrison far off and unfamiliar places was something they could not tolerate, and these duties often led to serious discontent amongst the sepoys.[69] By localization, the remnants of the Hindustani portion of the Bengal army would no longer be expected to serve in the Punjab and at the frontier. This necessarily meant that regiments would have to be raised for the garrisoning of the province and the north-western frontier in the Punjab.

As a result of this policy, Punjabis, who had been called to arms during the mutiny, found permanent places in the ranks of the infantry and cavalry regiments of the Bengal Army which were stationed in the Punjab and its north-west frontier. Consequently by 1861, the old Bengal Army was reconstituted into two practically separate bodies, one comprising old elements of the high-caste Hindus from north-central India, but significantly reduced in strength—consisting of remnants of the Bengal Army that had remained loyal during the Mutiny—and mixed with men of low caste, and the other created out of the regiments and levies of the Punjab Force that had been raised to put down the mutinous Bengal Army.[70] By 1862 the Bengal Army had added a third distinct component—the Gurkhas. By 1870, of the forty-nine infantry regiments of the Bengal Army, the Gurkha and hill troops constituted four mixed regiments of Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims, most of them raised in 1857–8, accounted for sixteen, and the rest were the remnants of the Bengal Army, most of them of a mixed nature.[71] To preserve the distinctiveness of these regiments, the Governor General ordered that these regiments specially recruited from one class should confine recruitment entirely to that class, and that no alteration to the constitution of the regiments should take place.[72] With these changes, by 1870, 35 per cent of the Bengal Army was recruited strictly from Punjab proper.[73]

The second, and perhaps more important, rationale for localization was to keep troops of different 'nationalities' apart, to preserve natural 'race' antagonisms.[74] In the post-bellum Bengal Army, the Punjab, already furnishing a large part to fill in the gap created by the revolt, provided a convenient counterpoise against the Hindustani elements remaining. Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, and Pathans, with their age old antipathy to the purbiyas,[75] would provide a useful balance in the strength

of the Bengal Army, an advantage that would be lost if they were allowed to develop an *esprit de corps* by mixing freely. The Punjab was indeed custom-made to play the role of counter-weight to the Hindustanis within the Bengal Army. There was a certain amount of historical hostility between the Punjabis and the purbiyas reinforced as it were by differences in religion, race, and language. Furthermore, by localization of recruitment and services, these two components could be set physically apart, so that their mutual antagonisms could be preserved. The army was further able to exploit the heterogeneous nature of Punjabi society, riven by caste, tribal, and religious differences, to make it difficult for the Punjab component to fuse into a united hostile bloc against the British. Sikhs could be used against Muslims tribesmen and vice versa, and the Pathans could be used against both of them. It was with this in mind that the Punjab regiments in the 1860s and 1870s were formed entirely on 'class company' system which meant that each company of a regiment should comprise a different race or caste, one of Sikhs, one of Punjabi Muslims, one of Pathans, etc. A typical Punjab regiment would therefore comprise one company of Sikhs, two companies of Pathans, and one company of Hindu Jats, maintaining a crude ratio of one Sikh to every two Punjabi Muslims.[76] Army authorities, when recruiting in the Punjab, employed the added safeguard that neither Sikhs nor Punjabi Muslims be allowed to exceed one-half the complement of the regiment.[77]

Changes were thus made to the constitution of the Bengal Army after the Mutiny in a deliberate attempt to prevent the northern native army from being dominated by a single bloc of soldiers. Punjabis were recruited not so much to replace but *to balance* the Hindustani component of the army, with the Gurkhas included as further safeguard. It would be erroneous to say at this stage that the Indian Army had been 'Punjabicized'. As late as 1875, out of a total strength of 44,690, sepoys from the Punjab accounted for only 12,558 in the Bengal Army; Punjabis hardly featured in the Madras Army; and only 4542 of them were serving in the Bombay Army.[78] Military authorities continued to be cautious about expanding recruitment in the Punjab because of uneasiness in military circles that just as easily as the Punjabis had come to the aid of the British during

the Mutiny, they could, once they had monopoly of force, foment another mutiny themselves.[79] The number of Punjabis recruited was thus restricted to the limit that was deemed necessary and practicable for the division of the strength of the army, and although officers were still keen to enlist more Sikhs into their regiments, military authorities laid down that no changes should be made to the balance of the army which might prejudice its safety.[80]

Up to 1885, the views of the Punjab Committee held sway, and the army was maintained strictly on principles that foregrounded internal security. By the early 1880s, however, a long series of frontier troubles culminating in the Russian scare led to a new thinking about the colonial army. The army had to be reoriented from its sole purpose of maintaining internal security towards meeting an external danger. This resulted in a restructuring of the army, the lifting of restrictions on recruitment of Punjabis, and ultimately paved the way for Punjab's domination of the colonial army.

'Martial Races', Class Regiments, and the Punjab

In 1880, soon after the Second Afghan War,[81] the state of the colonial army once again came under official review. British India's uneasy relationship with its western neighbour Afghanistan was now complicated by suspicions of Russian imperialist intentions towards India.[82] The prospects of native regiments having to fight against a formidable European enemy provided the impetus for rethinking of the existing state of the native component of the colonial army and how it would fare when faced with such an enemy. Up to the 1880s, although the army had been involved in campaigns against Afghan troops across the frontier, its function was regarded primarily as an internal one—as the guardian of the imperial order within the empire. But by the late nineteenth century, threat perceptions by the army authorities had undergone a change. The military authorities in India became obsessed with the 'Great Game' with Russia, and were no longer content to maintain the army in India merely as an internal policing force. With the army now

more likely to function as a protection force against foreign attack, military authorities in India began to talk of the need to improve its fighting efficiency.

The most prominent military voice during this period belonged to Lord Roberts, C-in-C of the Bengal Army.[83] Roberts had had extensive experience of military operations across the north-western frontier having commanded the Punjab Frontier Forces, the Afghan Field Force from 1878–9, and later made his name with his famous march from Kabul to Kandahar in 1880.[84] In a series of letters and notes compiled during his term as C-in-C of the Bengal Army from 1885 to 1893, Roberts asserted that the efficiency of the native army could only be improved by recruiting the best fighting materials that could be found in India.[85] He argued that the prevailing practice of recruiting different classes of soldiers[86] just for the sake of keeping a check on each other was outdated. British India, he added, was faced with a pressing threat from the north-west, and the potential foe, unlike any the Indian Army had faced before, was a powerful European one. There was a need, therefore, to organize the army in such a way as to enable the government to put in the field troops that were composed of the best fighting materials.[87] By the 1880s, Roberts, and indeed most of his fellow officers in India, had no doubts where these warlike classes could be found.[88] He announced:

> I have no hesitation myself in stating that except Gurkhas, Dogras, Sikhs, the pick of Punjabi Muhammadans, Hindustanis of the Jat and Ranghur castes, and certain classes of Pathans, there are no native soldiers in our service whom we could venture with safety to place in the field against the Russians.[89]

The notion that certain social groups or 'races' in India, namely the Sikhs, Punjabis, Pathans, and Gurkhas, were inherently better warriors than others was based on the belief, popular amongst British soldiers in the nineteenth century, that in India, 'certain clans and classes can bear arms; the others have not the physical courage necessary for the warrior'.[90] The belief that 'martial' qualities were inherent in an individual belonging to a particular group eventually developed into a racist recruiting doctrine known as the 'martial race theory'.[91] The ideology of the 'martial race' was, in a way, a reflection of wider British perceptions of Indian society. The British saw that the Indian

caste system, with its emphasis on the division and specialization of labour, necessarily implied that some people made better soldiers than others; the existence of the Kshatriya or warrior caste as traditional arm bearers indicated that the distinction between warlike groups and non-martials was indeed indigenous to India.[92] Lieutenant General George MacMunn, one of the most persuasive proponents of the martial race theory argued that tradesmen, artificers, and goldsmiths could never make good soldiers, for they had all come under the 'ancient grooming of the Vaisha...and had never worn a sword by their side'.[93] It was highly plausible that the British 'martial race' theory had been influenced by Indian self-images, but the selection of a 'martial race' was certainly not based merely on the social hierarchy of traditional Indian society. How else would one account for the identification of groups such as Gurkhas, Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, Jats, Ranghurs, and Pathans as 'martial races', while high-caste Brahmins and Rajputs from the south and east were regarded as 'non-martials'? Furthermore, why were most of the 'martial classes' concentrated in north-western India, particularly in the Punjab? Clearly, a different selection process, quite apart from the Indian caste system, was at work.

To a large extent, British estimates of the respective military value of different castes and races were the result of their own military experiences in India. The army's most recent military experiences had been confined to the north: the two Anglo-Sikh wars, frontier skirmishes against the trans-Indus border tribes, and the 1857 Mutiny. In all these, the army had had the opportunity to observe, at first hand, how certain groups, particularly the border Pathans, Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, and Gukhas had performed militarily. The case of the Sikhs was typical. Despite having defeated the Sikhs twice in the middle of the nineteenth century, British commanders were full of admiration for the bravery of Sikh soldiers.[94] Even Dalhousie, who deeply distrusted the Sikhs just after the annexation of the Punjab, was ready to admit that they were a warlike people who were ready to take up arms at a moment's notice. The military efficiency of Ranjit Singh's army, trained and equipped in European fashion, had long since led the British to regard the Sikhs as a martial people.[95] This admiration was

later reinforced by the steadfast support given by the Sikhs during the 1857 Rebellion, when many Sikh soldiers fought alongside British soldiers in the vanguard of the final assault on Delhi.

The same was true of the Muslim tribes from the Salt Range tract of the Punjab. In their military campaigns against the Sikh forces in 1848–9, the British had enlisted the military services of Muslim chieftains from the north-western districts of Rawalpindi and Jhelum, in the area known as the Salt Range tract. Many of these warlike tribes had exercised political control in their respective ancestral tracts until the Sikhs subjugated and reduced them to destitution. When offered the opportunity, they were, therefore, more than prepared to rally to the British banner and exact their revenge on the Sikhs. The head of the prominent Gakkhar tribe in Rawalpindi, Raja Muhhammud Khan, for instance, joined Nicholson in 1848, and fought in Hazara and Multan alongside the British in 1849.[96] As a reward for their services, members of this tribe had been enlisted into the Indian Army since annexation, serving mainly in the Punjab Frontier Force. In 1857 the Gakkhars once again proved their steadfastness, and many of them did excellent service by providing men for the Delhi Field Force and raising local levies to maintain order in their respective localities. Since then members of these tribes, most prominently Gakkhars, Janjuas, Awans, and Rajput Tiwanas, classified broadly by military authorities as Punjabi Muslims, were regularly recruited for cavalry regiments of the Bengal Army and the Punjab Frontier Force. Beside being impressed with their track record, the British saw in them, with their traditional and historical enmity against the Sikhs, an effective counterpoise against the latter in the army.[97]

The perceptions of the British were, therefore, important determining criteria in the definition and selection of a 'martial race'. But in the 1880s the northern races enjoyed more prominence than their southern counterparts because their military qualities had caught the attention of British officers serving in the north, whose opinions generally carried some weight in military circles. The better officers of the colonial army tended to gravitate towards the north-west, where there were constant campaigning and from where career advancement was more

pronounced, while the other presidency armies would normally end up with the rejected, disaffected, second class officers.[98] As a result, senior posts in the army were dominated by those whose experiences were limited to the Punjab section of the Bengal Army. Consequently, officers like Roberts, for example, tended to take greater interest in the northern races with whom they were better acquainted; they convinced themselves that India's fighting army, as far as a great campaign beyond the north-western frontier was concerned, must be composed mainly of the Sikhs, Punjabis, and Pathans.[99] They pointed out that the northern races under their command were physically more robust, and particularly suited to military service on the frontier. Not only were they thought to be better adapted to the rigours of the climate and terrain than their eastern and southern counterparts,[100] but they were seen to be more adept at the kinds of warfare that were fought at the frontier.[101] These perceptions were soon transformed into policies as Hindustani elements of the Punjab Frontier Force were finally eliminated in 1883 on the ground that their health was not up to the rigorous climatic demands which the Punjabis' physique made them capable of withstanding.[102] The 'martial race' theory became popular in the late nineteenth century, some two decades after the Punjabis had been partially entrenched in the ranks of the Bengal Army. With the army's adherence to principles of localization of recruitment and services, military action, which was limited almost invariably to the north-western frontier, became the strict preserve of the Punjabi regiments serving there. Inevitably, the Punjab regiments were conditioned by active and unremitting service of the past twenty to thirty years along a rugged terrain. Under such conditions, it was natural for the northern regiments to develop a higher level of efficiency and spirit.

Regiments garrisoned in the east and south, on the other hand, saw little or no action, their regimental lives revolving around drill, cantonment duties, and the maintenance of regimental lines. The prospect of spending an entire military career in the drudgery cantonment duties deterred the better classes of recruits from military service. In the Bombay Army, recruiting officers thus found it difficult to obtain a good class of recruits, especially, in Rajputana where it was believed that the Bomaby sepoy was more often employed as a labourer than soldier.

Many of the better classes, especially the Rajputs, who considered manual labour derogatory, were discouraged from enlisting by the knowledge that extensive line building or repairing had been, of late years, occupying the native infantry regiments in nearly every cantonment.[103] It was a similar situation in Madras. In 1871 Sir Frederick Haines, C-in-C, Madras Army, lamented that his officers and men were 'falling into the delusion that they had nothing but police duties to perform',[104] with the result that only second-rate recruits were attracted to the army. A vicious cycle subsequently developed. The admission of poorer and probably less motivated recruits only served to reinforce the prejudices of British officers against the southern sepoy; eventually, as fewer were recruited because they were thought poorly of, fewer actually regarded the army as a viable career. This phenomenon was not unique to Madras. Philip Mason, who served as Deputy Commissioner in the hill district of Garhwal in the United Provinces an area of high recruitment, observed that in areas where recruitment was intensive, getting a place in the army was a 'common ambition and a laudable goal; but where opportunities diminished, men would forget to think of life in the army.[105]

The army's preference for the so-called 'martial races' brought about a gradual geographic shift northwards of its recruitment pattern. When Roberts became C-in-C of the Bengal Army in 1885, he began to put into practice what he had preached. In September 1886 he proposed that all 'unwarlike' portions of the armies of all the three presidencies be replaced by men drawn from the 'martial races'.[106] He laid down an improved system of recruiting in which specific classes, known for their martial qualities, were to be identified and recruitment intensified in areas where classes were to be found.[107] In 1891 he proposed to the Secretary of State the establishment of territorial recruiting depots and the appointment of district recruiting officers who would be responsible for recruiting a particular class. He proposed that these depots be located in the following areas: Peshawar for recruiting Pathans, Rawalpindi for Punjabi Muslims, Amritsar for Sikhs, Jullunder for Dogras, Delhi for Jats, and Lucknow for cis-Jumna Hindus.[108] His proposals were subsequently adopted and were to remain largely in place until 1917. This new system meant that recruiting was now given a

territorial focus, and this focus was shifting irrevocably towards the Punjab.

By the 1890s, the role of the armed forces in India had undergone a reappraisal. In the 1860s and 1870s, the army was mainly kept as an internal security force, and 'divide and rule' was the underlying policy governing its organization. But towards the end of Robert's tenure as C-in-C of the Army in India, defence of empire was the role which the army was expected to perform. This meant that the Army in India had to be reorganized accordingly, and that 'divide and rule' was no longer to be a cardinal principle.[109] First, priority was to be given to acquiring the right materials for the army. Consequently, from 1890 onwards Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, Dogras, Jats, Pathans, and Gurkhas were the principal classes recruited into the Indian Army; their recruitment gradually intensified as heavy reductions were made in the Madras Army. In 1891, in the place of Telegus, Ahirs, Gujars, and others who were considered 'non-martial', more battalions of Punjabis and Gurkhas were raised. The following year, the active part of the Madras Army which garrisoned Burma was reconstituted into six battalions of northerners, comprising thirteen companies of Sikhs, twenty of Punjabi Muslims, two of Jats, and eight of Gurkhas and Hillmen. These changes were not limited to the Madras Army; in 1891 four Hindustani regiments of the Bengal Army were replaced by Punjabi Muslims drawn from Rawalpindi division, a Dogra regiment, and a Garhwal regiment, and orders were issued for the elimination of thirty companies of 'other Hindus' including Gujars and Ahirs. The composition of non-Punjabi regiments in the Bengal Army was subsequently to be confined to Muslims, Brahmins, Rajputs, Jats, Bundelas, and Hillmen. In the Bombay Army, similar changes were made by expanding the number of Baluchis and Punjabis in the cavalry.[110]

Roberts further proposed that regiments be reorganized from mixed to mono-regiments, arguing that regiments comprising a homogeneous 'martial class' would be more efficient than mixed regiments.[111] Consequently, as recruitment came to be concentrated on a handful of select 'martial classes', class company regiments gradually gave way to class regiments, in which the entire regiment consisted of a single class.

Roberts' policies of concentrating recruitment on a few select groups of northern races and reintroducing the single class regiments were diametrically opposed to the tenet laid down by the Peel Commission that 'the native army should be composed of different nationalities and castes...mixed promiscuously through each regiment'. Warnings had been sounded against allowing, 'one tribe, such as the Sikhs, [to] be armed in such comparative numbers as to become in themselves a source of danger';[112] in 1892 the Secretary of State for India, Viscount Cross, thought it necessary to caution Roberts 'to be careful when selecting the best fighting material, to enlist only those who were likely to remain faithful...[and] to equalise the proportion of each race'.[113] To his detractors, Roberts replied that it was ultimately a question of priorities: having a large number of northern fighting men in the colonial army entailed a risk, but the 'greatest risk of all is to be without an army which will fight'.[114] Nevertheless, due to some official reservations, Roberts' proposal of converting all regiments of the Indian Army to mono-regiments was never fully executed, the army retaining a mixture of mono and mixed regiments.

Like Roberts, Lord Kitchener, who became C-in-C of the Indian Army in 1903, believed that it was more crucial, at a time when the empire was still very much under the threat of a possible Russian invasion, to organize the army on principles of fighting efficiency rather than security. He perceived that the main danger threatening British India in 1905 was the menacing advance of Russia towards India's north-western frontier. He was convinced that, despite Russia's recent defeat in the Russo-Japanese war, the Russian army was still intact and formidable, and that Russian designs on Central Asia and the British Indian empire had not been forgotten. As far as Kitchener was concerned, the need to strengthen India's defence, especially on its north-western frontier, was now more urgent then ever.[115] Accordingly, he continued Robert's work of weeding out the non-martial elements from the army, and replacing them with the 'martial classes' of north India. Fourteen Madras regiments were reconstituted into nine Punjabis and five Gurkha regiments; and at the turn of the century, Sikh and Punjabi Muslim recruits gradually replaced the old classes of soldiers from Rohilkhand and Oudh.[116]

During his tenure as C-in-C, Kitchener saw the completion of the process, which had begun in 1895, of the amalgamation of the three separate presidency armies into a single Indian Army. The unified Indian Army of 1895 was initially divided into four regional commands: the Punjab (including the Punjab Frontier Force), Bengal, Madras, and Bombay. In 1903, Kitchener reorganized it into formations which were expected to operate during a war. It was divided into a field force of about 152,000 men organized into five divisions and three brigades, and an internal security force of 80,000. These reforms confirmed Punjab's status as the most important province to the military establishment in India. Not only was it strategically crucial as the ideal staging and supply base for operations across the north-western frontier, but the Punjab was, by 1900, supplying more than half the combatants of the entire Indian Army.[117] Although the Russian threat dissipated with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the military importance of the Punjab remained undiminished. It maintained a close relationship with the military as the main recruiting ground for the army, a relationship which was to last until the British departure from India in 1947.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the opening of the Punjab for recruitment and its subsequent development as the major recruiting ground for the colonial army in India was the direct result of the changes made to the Indian Army from 1858 to about 1900. These changes, as I have explained above, were made in response to the requirements of the imperial state, and the colonial administration carefully and consciously developed the army in the way that could best serve their imperial interests. The form and content of the Indian Army was, therefore, closely related to British perceptions of the threat to their security in India.

The Punjab became militarily important because of its continued relevance to the successive phases of army reforms. Punjabis first showed their military value with their vital intervention on the side of the British during the 1857 Mutiny. In the post-Mutiny reforms, Punjab regiments formed an

essential component in the execution of the policy of 'divide and rule' in the army, and by the end of the century, the Punjab had assumed unrivalled position as the home of the 'martial races'. By the end of the century, the Punjab had become to all intents and purposes, the main military labour market of the Indian Army.

Endnotes

1. Lt. Col. Sir Wolesley Haig, 'The Armies of the East India Company' in H. H. Dodwell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, Combridge, 1932, vol. VI, p. 158.

2. In the early nineteenth century, Hindustanis and Konkanis accounted for over 90 per cent of the native regiments of the Bombay Army. Madan Paul Singh, *The Indian Army under the East India Company*, Delhi, 1976, p. 156.

3. T. A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1882–1922*, London 1974, pp. 83–4.

4. See Dirk Kolff, Naukar, *Rajput Sepoy: An Ethno-history of the Military Labour Market in North India*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 177–81.

5. The term Indian Army came into official use following Kitchener's reorganization in 1903 to distinguish between British officered Indian regiments and regiments of the British Army serving in India. Prior to 1903, the term, 'Army in India' was used to refer collectively to the Bengal, Madras, and Bombay armies and the British and Europeans regiments garrisoned in India. For an account of the growth and development of the armed forces in colonial India, see the GoI, *Army in India and Its Evolution Including an Account of the Establishment of the Royal Air Force in India*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1924.

6. At annexation, the region known as the Punjab stretched from the Afghan border to Delhi. Although Punjab literally refers to the five inter-river tracts between the Indus and the Sutlej, it is a name that has historically been applied to cover a much wider area stretching from the trans-Indus frontier districts of Peshwar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Dera Ghazi Khan to Delhi in the East. In 1901 the five frontier districts were separated from the Punjab and formed into the North-Western Frontier Province, and in 1911, Delhi was separated from the Punjab when it replaced Calcutta as the imperial capital of the Raj. O. H. K. Spate, T. A. Learmouth and B. H. Farmer, *India, Pakistan and Ceylon: The Regions*, London, reprint, 1960, p. 518.

7. For an account of the militarization of the peasantry of the Punjab following the diminishing of Mughal authority in the region, see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Delhi 1963. See also Muzzafar Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–48*, Delhi, 1986.

8. C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 127.

9. Andrew J. Major, 'Return to Empire: the British and the Sikhs', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1981.

10. Fauja Singh Bajwa, *The Military System of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1964, p. 102.

11. Boris Mollo, *The Indian Army*, Poole, 1986, p. 52.

12. Despatch from Governor General to Secret Committee, 7 April 1849, in Papers Relating to Punjab, 1847–9, Parliamentary Papers (hereafter PP), 1849, Cmd. 1071, vol. XLI, p. 700.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 702.

15. R. Bosworth-Smith, *Life of John Lawrence*, London, 1883, vol. 2, p. 53.

16. General Report of the Administration of the Punjab for the Years 1849–50 and 1850–1, in PP, Misc. 1854, vol. LXIX, p. 459.

17. General Report of Administration in the Punjab, 1849–51, p. 480.

18. Ibid.

19. Irregular regiments were occasionally raised to add to the strength of the Bengal and Bomaby armies, and were normally used for frontier duties. Irregular regiments were considerably cheaper than regiments of the line, and had only one-sixth the number of European officers in a normal regiment. Furthermore, these regiments were usually recruited from the border tribes.

20. Secretary to Governor General to Board of Administration, 28 May 1849 in India Office Records (hereafter IOR), Home/ Miscellaneous, File 318, vol. 761, p. 1035.

21. General Report on the Administration of the Punjab, 1849–51, p. 24.

22. Secretary, Governor General to Board of Administration, 28 May 1849.

23. 'Army Review', in *Calcutta Review*, vol. XXVI, July–Dec. 1856, London, p. 107.

24. Ibid.

25. Sita Ram, *From Sepoy to Subedar*, James Lunt (ed.), London, 1988, p. 159.

26. Ibid.

27. Kripal Chandra Yadav, 'British Policy towards Sikhs, 1849–57' in Harbans Singh and N. G. Barrier (eds), *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Ganda Singh* Patiala, 1976, p. 191.

28. *Calcutta Review*, vol. XXVI, July–Dec. 1856, pp. 108–9.

29. Eric Stokes, *The Peasants Armed: The Indian Rebellion of 1857*, edited by C. A. Bayly, Oxford, 1986, pp. 50–4.

30. Ibid.

31. Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men*, London, 1974, p. 225.

32. Ibid.

33. R. Temple, Secretary to Chief Commissioner to G. Edmonstone, Secretary to GoI, 25 May 1858, in *Mutiny Records* (Report) (hereafter *MMR*), vol. 8, part II, Lahore, 1911, p. 331.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., pp. 309, 317–18.

36. General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories, 1856–8, PP, 1859, Session 1, vol. XVIII, p. 485.

37. Memorandum by R. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner, Punjab, n.d., in *MRR*, vol. 8, part II, pp. 345–6.

38. Temple to Edmonstone, 25 May 1858, *MRR*, vol. 8, part II p. 333.

39. Ibid., p. 355.

40. Brigadier General A. Wilson to John Lawrence, 18 July 1857, in *Mutiny Records* (*Correspondence*) (hereafter *MRC*), vol. 7, part 1, Lahore, 1911, pp. 230–1.

41. Quoted in J. W. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War in India*, vol. II, London, 1867, pp. 614–15.

42. Brandreth to Edmonstone, 23 July 1857, *MRC*, vol. 7(i), p. 226.

43. Memorandum by R. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner, Punjab, n.d., *MRR*, vol. 8(ii), p. 328.

44. Lawrence to Edmonstone, 13 May 1857, *MRC*, vol. 7(i), pp. 21–2.

45. Temple to Edmonstone, 25 May 1857, *MRR*, vol. 8(ii), p. 339.

46. Capt. H. R. James, Officiating Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Punjab to Secretary, GoI, Foreign Dept, 17 May 1857, *MRC*, vol. 7(i), p. 36.

47. Ibid., pp. 359–60.

48. Temple to Edmonstone, 25 May 1857, *MRR*, vol. 8(ii), p. 363.

49. Capt. H. R. James, to Secretary, GoI, Foreign Dept, 17 May 1857, *MRC*, vol. 7(i), p. 35.

50. General Report for the Administration of Punjab 1856–8, p. 487.

51. Thornton to Montgomery, 23 Feb. 1858, *MRR*, vol. 8(i), pp. 315–16.

52. Ibid., p. 395.

53. W. S. Talbot, *Punjab District Gazetteer, Jhelum* (hereafter, *PDG*, followed by district), vol. XXVIIA, Lahore, 1904, p. 71.

54. Report by R. Montgomery, Judl. Comn., Punjab, n.d., *MRR*, vol. 8(ii), p. 246.

55. Ouseley to Thornton, 25 Feb. 1858, *MRR*, vol. 8(i), pp. 396–7.

56. Ibid.

57. Return of Actual Strength of Queen's and East India Company's Forces in the Three Presidencies and the Punjab, 1859, in PP, 1859, Session 2(64), vol. XXIII, p. 491.

58. General Report on the Administration of Punjab Territories, 1856–8, PP, 1859, Session 238, vol. XVIII, pp. 495–9.

59. The Commission which came to be known as the Peel Commission after its chairman included the Duke of Cambridge, General Officer Commanding the British Army, Lord E. H. Stanley, Commissioner for Affairs of India, General G. Tweeddale, Colonel of the 30th Foot Regiment, Viscount Melville, Colonel of the 100th Foot Regiment, Sir G. A. Wetherall, Adjutant General, British Army, Major General P. Montgomery, Colonel Will Burton, Colonel Thomas Tait, and Major General Hancock. Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Organization of the Indian Army; together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix in PP, Cmd. 2515, 1859, session 1, vol. V, p. xi.

60. It was estimated that the cost of maintaining one infantry regiment of British troops was around Rs 573,343 per annum, more than double the cost of a native regiment which was estimated at Rs 277,612. See Minute by J. P. Grant, President, Council of India in Council, 4 June 1858, in Report of Commissioners, p. 411.

61. See, for example, the testimony of Colonel C. B. Becher of the Bengal Army, in ibid., pp. 69–70.

62. Evidence of the Punjab Committee as cited in Precis of Answers Received in India, by Lt. Col. H. M. Durand, Aug. 1858, Appendix 71, in ibid., p. 534.

63. Report of Commissioners, p. xiv.

64. See for example the testimony of Major General C. B. Low, a retired officer of the Madras Army, but who had served principally in Bengal. ibid., p. 53.

65. Testimony of Lt. Col. Mayhew, ibid., Cmd. 2515, p. 538.

66. Testimonies of Sir George Clerk, Governor of Bombay, and Major General Hearsey, ibid., p. 78.

67. Ibid., p. xiv.

68. Punjab Committee recommendations quoted in 'Precis of Replies to Questions Having Reference to the Native Infantry of the Bengal Army' by Lt. Col. H. M. Durand, 4 Sept. 1848, in Appendix 71 of ibid., p. 540.

69. Extract from 'Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Native Infantry, from its formation in 1757 to 1796, by Capt. Williams, of the Invalid Establishment of the Bengal Army n.d., in PP, 1877, vol. LXII, p. 370.

70. Further Papers Respecting Proposed Changes in India's Army System, 1893–4 in PP, 1892–4, vol. LXIII, p. 4.

71. 'Notes on the Native Army of Bengal, with its Present Material and Organization, as Compared with the Past', by C. H. Brownlow, September 1875, App. T. in Despatch from Adjutant General, Army Headquarters to Secretary to the GoI, in PP, 1877, vol. LXII, p. 226.

72. Lt. Col. H. W. Norman, Secretary to GoI, Military Dept. to Officiating Adjutant General of Army of India, 25 Nov. 1862, in Correspondences Relating to the Composition of the Army, ibid., p. 392.

73. Ibid., p. 489.

74. From GoI to Secretary of State for India, 2 Nov. 1892, Papers respecting Changes in the Indian Army System, 1893–4, vol. LXIII. p. 254.

75. The term Purbiya, which literally means easterner, was derived from the Persian word, '*purab*' meaning east. The Punjabis and British officers serving in the Punjab often used the term to refer, in a pejorative sense, to the Hindustani sepoys from the north-central plains of India.

76. Precis of Returns, Aug. 1858, in Report of Commissioners, p. 23.

77. Correspondences on the Organization of The Army, 1870, in PP, 1877, vol. LXII, p. 392.

78. Caste Returns for the Armies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay Presidencies, 1875, IOR:L/MIL/14/216.

79. Report of Commissioners, pp. 179–81.

80. Minute by Major General H. W. Norman on 'The Organization of the Native Army in India', 11 Oct. 1875 in PP, 1877, vol. LXII, p. 509.

81. Afghanistan and Britain fought their first war in 1848, after which the pro-British Dost Muhammud was installed as Amir in Kabul. But after his death in 1863, Anglo-Afghan relations began deteriorating, as the new Amir seemed more disposed towards Russia. In 1878, after failing to reach an exclusive alliance with Kabul, Lord Lytton decided to adopt a forward policy by extending the Indian border beyond Peshawar. This precipitated a war against Afghanistan which broke out on 20 Nov. 1878. The British successfully concluded the war in February 1879, but soon after an uprising broke out in Kabul where the British envoy, Sir Louis Cavagnari, was murdered. The uprising was quickly squashed by General Roberts, and a British puppet, Yakub Khan, was subsequently installed as the new Amir of Afghanistan. For an account of the two Anglo-Afghan wars, see Anthony Verrier, *Francis Younghusband and the Great Game*, London, 1911.

82. There are several good accounts of the historical background leading to the nineteenth century 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia. See for example M. S. Anderson, *Britain's Discovery of Russia, 1553–1815*, London, 1958; J. H. Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain*, Cambridge, Mass., 1950; E. Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1834–1838*, Oxford, 1979; Malcolm Yapp, *Strategies of British India, Iran and Afghanistan*, Oxford, 1980.

83. Although the official designation of Lord Roberts was Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Army, the appointment carried with it supervisory authority over the Madras and Bombay armies. This effectively made him Commander-in-Chief of the entire Army in India.

84. General Lord Frederick Roberts, 'Bobs Bahadur' as he was known to the men under his command, was commander of the Madras Army from 1880 and the Bengal army from 1885 to 1893. See Frederick Roberts, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief*, London, 1897.

85. Roberts, 'On the Necessity of Increasing the Efficiency of the Native Army', 25 Sept. 1886, in Minutes and Notes & c, Jan.–Dec. 1889, vol. VI, pp. 153–4, National Army Museum (hereafter NAM).

86. The term 'class' as used by the army authorities in colonial India refers to social groups based on religion and caste rather than in the strict sense to describe social grouping by economic status.

87. Roberts, 'On the Improvement of the Fighting Efficiency of the Native Army, and the Recruiting and Organization of the Bombay Army', 20 May 1891, in Minutes and Notes & c, Jan.–April 1893, vol. VI, part II, pp. 889–90.

88. In 1884, Sir Edwin Collen noted that 'if the Commanding Officers of the Native Army were polled and their views accepted, the whole army would be composed of Sikhs, Pathans, and Gurkhas'. Recruiting in India. IOR:L/MIL/17/5/2152.

89. Robert, 'On the Necessity For Improving the Fighting Qualities of the Native Army', 8 Feb. 1890, in Minutes and Notes & c, Jan.–April 1893, vol. VI. part II, p. 544.

90. See G. A. MacMunn, *Armies of India*, London, 1911, p. 129.

91. For a discussion on the martial race theory see David Omissi, 'Martial Races': Ethnicity and Security in Colonial India 1858–1939, in *War and Society*, vol. 9, no. 1, May 1991, pp. 1–26.

92. Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 349.

93. Lieutenant General George MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India*, London, 1933, pp. 2–4.

94. See for example the testimony of General Thackwell, a British commander who fought in the Second Anglo-Sikh War, in E. J. Thackwell, *Narrative of the Second Sikh War, 1848–49*, London, 1851, p. 231.

95. Fauja Singh Bajwa, *The Military System of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1964.

96. Lepel Griffin *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab*, Lahore, revised edition, 1907, pp. 218–19.

97. Roberts, 'On the Necessity of Improving the Fighting Qualities of the Native Army', 8 Feb. 1890, in Minutes and Notes & c, Jan.–April 1893, vol. VI, part II, p. 545.

98. Adjutant General to Military Dept, 3 April 1875 Cmd. 1698 (1877) vol. LXII. Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Berkeley, 1971, p. 47.

99. GoI to Secretary of State, India, 2 Nov. 1892, Accounts and Papers, 1893–4, vol. LXIII, p. 259.

100. Memorandum by W. R. Mansfield, C-in-C, India, 'On the Localization of the Native Regiments', 15 March 1870, in Correspondences on the Organization of the Native Army, in PP, 1877, Cmd. 1698, vol. LXII, p. 367.

101. This has been convincingly argued by Clive Dewey in his paper, 'The Rise of the Martial Castes' presented at a seminar at the Council of Historical Research in London in 1989.

102. Colonel. J. W. Mcqueen, Secretary to Government of Punjab (GoP) to Chesney, Secretary to GoI, Military Dept, 5 Oct. 1883, Punjab Govt, Home/Military Proceedings (hereafter PHP(M)), 'A', Feb. 1884, Lahore Archives.

103. Confidential Report on Recruiting, Adjutant General, Bombay Army, 20 Oct. 1894, p. 7, NAM.

104. Heathcote, *Indian Army*, pp. 91–2.

105. Philip Mason, *A Shaft of Sunlight: Memories of A Varied Life*, London, 1978, pp. 130–1.

106. GoI, *Short Report on the Important Questions dealt with during the Tenure of Command of the Army in India by General Lord Roberts, 1885–1893*, Simla, 1893, p. 147. IOR:L/MIL/17/5/1613.

107. Ibid., p. 152.

108. Lieutenant General H. Hudson, *Recruiting in India before and during the War of 1914–1918*, Army Headquarters in India, Oct. 1919, p. 14, IOR:L/MIL/17/5/2152.

109. During his tenure as C-in-C, Roberts began a process of galvanizing the three presidency armies into a unified armed force, but the process was only completed during Lord Kitchener's tenure.

110. Record of Kitchener's Administration of the Army in India 1901–9, pp. 300–1. IOR:L/MIL/17/4/1617.

111. Questions dealt with during Lord Roberts' Command, 1885–93.

112. Testimony by Sir J. P. Grant, 4 June 1858, Cmd. 2515, 1859, vol. 5; see also Military Dept, 15 Sept. 1885, 'On the Increase and Organization of the Army in India' Files 6 and 8–10, vol. 5, Military Collection 120, p. 10. IOR:L/MIL/7/5460.

113. Quoted in Recruiting in India before and during the War of 1914–18, p. 3.

114. Roberts to Alfred Lyall, 28 July 1890, in Correspondence with England while Commander-in-Chief, India, 3 Jan.–8 March 1890, vol. IX, p. 55, NAM.

115. 'Note on the Military Policy in India', by Lord Kitchener, 19 July 1905, Simla, 1905, pp. 5–7, in Roberts Papers, NAM:7101-23-170.

116. Record of Kitchener's Administration of the Army in India, 1901–9, p. 312.

117. In 1900, Punjabi Muslims, including the Hazara tribes, Sikhs, Punjabi Hindus, and Hindus from the cis-Jumna territories around Delhi accounted for about 75,000 out of a total Indian Army strength of 141,000. Annual Caste Returns, 1900 IOR:L/MIL/14/224.

3

Reviving a 'Dead Letter': Military Indianization and the Ideology of Anglo-India 1885–91[1]

Chandar S. Sundaram

The time has arrived when, on the ground of justice, no less than that of policy, it is right and proper to open a military career to the higher classes of the native subjects of the Queen, including the native soldiers already in the army who are deserving of employment. We can no longer continue to use the native only as a subordinate military tool, but must associate him with ourselves as an intelligent agent.

Sir George Chesney, 1886; 1888[2]

No one would pretend to believe for one moment that regiments commanded and officered by natives of India would be equal, either in the field or in the cantonment, to regiments commanded and officered by British officers.

Sir Ashley Eden, 1885[3]

In 1894, Sir George Chesney wrote that, as far as the Indian Army was concerned, the portion of the Royal Proclamation of 1858 which had decreed that Indians 'of whatever race or creed [would] be freely admitted' to posts in all branches of Her Majesty's Government of India, was 'a dead letter'.[4] It should be no surprise that Chesney made this remark, for he had been a career officer in the Bengal Army, where he had risen to the rank of General, and had culminated his career by serving first

as Military Secretary of the Government of India, and then as Military Member on the highest governing body of Anglo-India, the Viceroy's Council. More importantly, from 1885 till his retirement from the Indian Army and subsequent return to England in 1891, Chesney tried, on four different occasions, and with a 'fecundity of argument...that can only have sprung from a profound and sincere conviction',[5] to convince Anglo-Indian military and political officialdom to implement a policy admitting Indians into the wholly British higher officer grade of the Indian Army—that is to 'Indianize' it. Chesney's efforts in this direction, though unsuccessful, made military Indianization an issue of prime importance that vexed Anglo-Indian military policy until a mere seven years before India won independence from Great Britain. Most of what has been published on military Indianization sees it as beginning with Montagu's statement of 20 August 1917 which removed 'the bar which has hitherto precluded the admission of Indians to Commissioned rank in His Majesty's Army'. What has been almost consistently overlooked is the fact that the 1917 declaration on military Indianization was the outcome of a long and complex debate which stretched back to the early nineteenth century.[6] This chapter is a detailed analysis of Chesney's proposals and his opponents' responses. I will demonstrate that, besides defining the contours of the official and unofficial debate on military Indianization until 1940, the dialogue during the years 1885 to 1891 sheds important light on the Raj, its ideology, and the role of the military within that ideology.

I

Military Indianization was an issue to which Anglo-India attached great importance for a number of reasons. The first was that military force was crucial to British imperial enterprise in South Asia. This 'military fact' was recognized by Anglo-Indian ideologues of both the Company and Crown periods, and points to the existence of what Douglas Peers has conceptualized as 'Anglo-Indian Militarism'.[7] As one of the most eminent Company officials opined in the 1820s: 'Our government of...[India] is essentially military, and our means of

improving our possessions through the operation of our civil institutions depend on the wise and politic exercise of that military power on which that whole fabric rests'.[8]

Sixty years later, a high-ranking member of the Indian Civil Service echoed much the same sentiment, writing emphatically that Anglo-Indians

> cannot shut our eyes to the fact that we hold India by our military supremacy, and that we shall only continue to hold it so long as that supremacy...is recognised and maintained, and it is to the strength of our position arising from that, that we are enabled to offer the natives of India a large share in the civil administration of the country.[9]

Second, in common with other major institutions of British India, the Indian Army firmly rested on 'collaboration' between Briton and Indian.[10] At all times during its existence, the colonial Indian Army's manpower was largely Indian. For example, in 1805, British armed forces in India comprised 130,000 sepoys and 24,500 British troops. A half century later, British troops in India numbered only 38,502, as opposed to 226,352 sepoys. This disparity lessened somewhat in the period of Crown rule: in 1895, the colonial Indian Army had on strength 72,573 British troops and 133,663 sepoys.[11]

Third, the British began to feel the need to collaborate militarily with the indigenous populations of South Asia in the mid to late seventeenth century, when their position was quite insecure, and a unique three-tiered rank structure reflecting this insecurity was developed. The middle tier of this structure was occupied by a class of 'native officers'—later termed Viceroy's Commissioned Officers—who mediated between British officers and sepoys. When the British officer establishment was expanded in the mid-eighteenth century, the command responsibilities of the native officers diminished. However, they were kept on, ostensibly to aid in the recruitment of Indian rank-and-file, as well as to provide incentives for the ambitious sepoy, who could rise to native officer rank within the regimental structure of what would remain until 1858, the military forces of the English East India Company; though it is more probable that, given the vast numerical inferiority of the British in India, the Company's military authorities were loath to diminish or abolish the native officer class entirely, for fear of provoking a revolt.

A fourth reason that military Indianization became a prominent issue had to do with the nature of Anglo-Indian ideology. Imperial powers, by their very nature, have to develop ideologies to justify their rule over colonial possessions, both to themselves, and to their subject peoples. The Anglo-Indian colonial state was no exception. However, Anglo-Indian ideology was never a simple, coherent monolith of ideas.[12] Rather, as Thomas Metcalf convincingly argues, the ideas buttressing the British imperial enterprise in South Asia were complex, and, at times, contradictory and inconsistent.[13] At its heart, Anglo-Indian ideology was shaped by two fundamental and opposing principles: 'similarity' and 'difference'. Metcalf postulates that

> at...times, and for some purposes, the British conceived of the Indians as people like themselves, or as people who could be transformed into...a facsimile of themselves; while at other times they emphasised what they believed to be the enduring quality of Indian difference.[14]

The situation was further complicated by the fact that, at times, Anglo-Indian ideology simultaneously accommodated both similarity and difference, which renders any attempt to arrive at a general picture exceedingly hard. It is possible, however, to make a general periodization: during Company Raj, varieties of similarity, such as Jones' and Hastings' Orientalism and Mill and Bentinck's reformist Utilitarianism,[15] predominated Anglo-Indian ideology. Macaulay's pronouncement that the ultimate aim of British rule in India was the creation of a politically independent India based on British moral, political, and legal precepts bespoke a belief in the innately similar aptitudes between Briton and Indian.[16] In the 1840s, Henry Lawrence, one of the most eminent Company officials, advocated the greatest degree of similarity between Britons and Indians in terms of military aptitude. As opposed to those who had earlier dilated on this theme, Lawrence rejected the notion that native gentlemen needed to be recruited into the native officer grade. Rather, he contended that there already existed, within the sepoy ranks of the three presidency armies, men of 'better education, of superior character, [and]...bold and daring spirit'. Lawrence felt that, for these men—admittedly a minority—the regular pay and pension benefits of the Company's military service were not sufficient incentives to remain 'forever in a subordinate

position' in British employ.[17] He felt the situation all the more urgent because such men were leaving the Company's military 'in disgust' and joining the forces of Indian potentates, where they were rising to high rank.[18] Moreover, Lawrence intoned ominously, these native generals would not be loath to turn against the British the very expertise they had acquired from them. While he was not entirely blind to the dangers to the Company's position in granting higher command positions to able Indians—whom he likened to 'edged tools' to be approached with care—Lawrence nevertheless argued that, in the matter of granting qualified Indians positions of higher command responsibilities, 'justice and liberality will forge stronger chains of loyalty than a suspicious and niggardly policy'.[19]

In sharp contrast, during Crown Rule, differences between Briton and Indian were highlighted, almost to the point of becoming institutionalized, by ideologues such as Stephen, Maine, and Lyall.[20] Indians, far from being reasonable people, capable of assimilating British values and practices, were now characterized as 'steeped in idolatrous superstition and ignorant to the last degree',[21] incapable of improvement. A not insignificant measure of this view stemmed from Anglo-Indian inability to comprehend why, during the 'Mutiny', Indians in large numbers had rejected British rule, which was the embodiment of 'modernity and progress'.[22]

The martial race ideology was one of most unequivocal manifestations of difference in British India.[23] Essentially, it held that in Indian society, as opposed to western, only certain clans and classes possessed the physical courage to bear arms.[24] Although it reached its epitome from the 1880s onwards, elements of the martial races ideology were present much earlier. One of its essential elements was physical bearing. In the eighteenth century, the Bengal Army began recruiting men from the higher castes, who, besides being deemed 'respectable', were taller and more impressive on parade than were the sepoys of the two other presidency armies.[25] Another element was climate, which was conflated with civilizational determinism. According to James Forbes, an early nineteenth-century theorist, peoples living in the 'bracing, temperate climes' of northern India were virile and more capable of producing a higher level of civilization than were the inhabitants of the tropical south,

who were deficient in 'curiosity, enterprise and vigour'.[26] Forbes thought that the inhabitants of Rajputana, living in a climate that was 'delightful and temperate', were a 'noble race of Hindus, valorous [and] freedom loving'. Moreover, Rajputs, endowed as they were with a 'noble spirit, great energy, and athletic form', made, in Forbes' opinion, 'the best soldiers in India'.[27] A third factor in the Company's recruiting practices which contributed to the development of the martial races ideology was the emphasis on the 'yeoman'—the sturdy, independent peasant. This reflected a transposition of English values that preferred to recruit into the army the more 'dependable' and 'trustworthy' rural farmer than the urban-dwelling poor.[28] Another ingredient was the increasing shift in recruitment towards the north-west. The wholesale rebellion of the Bengal Army's soldiers in 1857 meant that the classes to which they belonged were, in the eyes of Anglo-India, permanently tainted. Replacement manpower had to be found, which it was in the frontier areas of the trans-Yamuna region—that is in the Punjab and what later became the North West Frontier Province—and Nepal. The percentage of Indian infantry battalions recruited from these areas almost doubled between the years 1862 and 1914 from 31 to 60 per cent, of which Punjabi units were preponderant. There was a corresponding decline in units recruited in the two southern presidencies.[29] Although this north-western orientation in recruitment was attributed to threats to India's security on that frontier,[30] one cannot help noticing how neatly it fit with Forbes' climatic determinism formulated earlier in the nineteenth century.

The final fixing of the martial races in the later nineteenth century was made possible by the rise of the positivist strand in nineteenth-century European intellectual thought, which sought to apply the precepts of natural science to human affairs, thus leading to the rise of the social sciences.[31] Ethnology and anthropology were two of these new social sciences. Nineteenth-century scholarship in these disciplines, produced by theorists such as Arthur Gobineau, James Prichard, and Charles Brace,[32] drew on historical models and emphasized a hierarchical political taxonomy of humanity. By conducting detailed comparisons of different 'races', these practitioners fully believed that they would be able to discover the reasons for the superiority of

one race over another, 'according to criteria which equated civilisation with a physiologically-determined bent towards the creation of "advanced", libertarian, morally-progressive political institutions'.[33] Influential Anglo-Indian scholar officials such as W. W. Hunter and Herbert Risley followed this lead by conceptualizing castes as ethnologically based races.[34] Proceeding with this hierarchializing enterprise required implementation of the taxonomic, or what Bernard Cohn terms the 'enumerative modality', that is information gathering and ordering on a large scale.[35] Ostensibly carried out for administrative purposes, the tools of the enumerative modality also rigidified the identities of Indians. Thus an illiterate Jat Sikh agriculturalist who had relatives in the army, would be classified 'martial' while a Tamil *gomasta*, who was literate but had no relations in the army would be classified as 'unmartial'. Individual Indians' agency and personal inclination had no place in this system.

By the late nineteenth century, Anglo-Indian military authorities had identified sixteen martial races.[36] Military authorities developed intricate rankings of communities within each of these races according to their martiality. According to a guide to the 'fighting races' of India, written 'to give the young British officer an idea of the material of which the native army is composed', the most martial Sikhs were drawn 'mainly...from certain Punjab tribes such as the Jat and the Khattri, which...have always shewn an amount of sturdy grit and manly independence of character'.[37] Though the Khattri Sikhs were traders, and therefore by definition unmartial, this was explained by the 'fact' that they were 'nothing like the Buniya...[T]he Khattri...[was]...a fine, steady, manly fellow, with much spirit and courage in him'.[38]

Paradoxically, though, the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, which has been already cited, seemed to enshrine the principle of similarity in the latter period. Furthermore, it began to be a touchstone for the *babus*[39]—Indians, overwhelmingly of Bengal, who had availed themselves of English education in order to qualify themselves for lower-division posts in the Anglo-Indian administration. Indeed, as Baxter has pointed out, this was the only outlet open to the ambitious Bengali, since trade and commerce in Bengal, unlike other parts of India,

was dominated by the British.[40] By the 1860s and 1870s, these Indians were dissatisfied because the British authorities were not living up to the liberal ideals of the proclamation. From this dissatisfaction sprang the first phase of progressive Indian nationalism and the founding of the Indian National Congress.[41]

II

All of the above factors induced Chesney, the Military Secretary to the Government of India, to revive the idea of Indianization in official circles. One of the more liberal officers in the Indian Army, Chesney was born in 1830, and educated at Addiscombe. He did well enough there to obtain a posting in the Bengal Engineers in 1848. Apart from a spell of active duty during the 1857 Uprising, Chesney spent his career on attachment to the Indian Public Works Department (IPWD).[42] Here, he developed a much closer working relationship with Indian subordinates than he would have done in the rigidly hierarchialized army. Some of these subordinates had graduated from the few engineering colleges that had been established in India.[43] From 1873 to 1880, he was in England, setting up and serving as the first President of Cooper's Hill Engineering College.[44] Thereafter, Chesney became Military Secretary to the Indian government.

Chesney first aired his views regarding military Indianization in official circles in a minute to the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) India, General Sir Donald Martin Stewart, in late January 1885. In view of the fact that Indians of the educated classes were making increasing inroads into the judicial and civil services, of British India, Chesney thought that it would be wise, in terms of justice and policy, for the Government of India to afford 'a higher and more extended military career [to] native gentlemen who may qualify themselves to embrace it'.[45]

In Anglo-India's worldview, especially of the late nineteenth century, 'native gentlemen' were members of the 'Indian land-owning aristocracy'. Having 'descended, in many cases, from ancestors who held high military office under former rulers', they were of good martial stock. A number of them were hereditary chieftains, who rallied 'their clansmen by the

hundreds to join the [British] standards'.[46] This characterization, which is Chesney's own, reveals an important aspect of Anglo-Indian thought. The use of the descriptive phrases 'landowning aristocracy' and 'hereditary chieftains' brings to mind an agrarian society ruled by local lords able to raise bands of armed retainers. A polity based on these characteristics essentially resembled the feudal structure in England four centuries before. In making this analogy, therefore, Chesney was conforming to the Anglo-Indian ideological practice of likening the Indian present with an idealized and often romanticized version of Britain's past.[47] Chesney reinforced this image by stating that the Indians to whom he was referring were, in many respects, similar to the Highland Scots clans of 150 years before.[48] Both were peoples living on the periphery of British power, and were eventually pacified by that power: the Scots in the early eighteenth century, and the Indians within living memory of Chesney's time.[49]

Chesney argued that the Indian gentlemen, lacking the intellectual training and inclination of the babus, were being virtually shut out of status employment under the British. In short, they were being marginalized, and were bound to realize this. Since he subscribed to the Anglo-Indian orthodoxy that it would be wise not to alienate the Indian aristocracy, Chesney felt that a career option had to be found that would both assuage their feelings of neglect and be 'congenial to their habits and traditions', which were martial.[50] It was clear to Chesney that 'martial' Indian gentlemen would be most interested in careers as Queen's Commissioned Officers of the Indian Army.

Queen's Commissions given to Indians would have to be earned, however, and to do this, Chesney stipulated that Indian gentlemen who desired an officer's career undergo some sort of military education emphasizing 'a good knowledge of English'. Chesney suggested that this training be undertaken at one of the four Chief's Colleges that had been set up over the previous fifteen years to educate Indian princes and aristocrats.[51] The idea behind these colleges was to provide moral uplift to the rulers and aristocrats of Princely India, to build their characters, so that they would rule their lands according to British precepts and values. In short, the intent was to inculcate within them the values and moral codes of English gentlemen, while at the

same time, preserving a modicum of 'difference'—in this case, their essential Indian-ness.[52] Since, at that time, the acknowledged 'nurseries' of English gentleman, and of English army officers as well,[53] were the public schools, it was perhaps natural for the Anglo-Indian authorities to consciously follow the public school model in setting up the Chief's Colleges.[54]

If Chesney was cautious about which Indians would be suitable for officer commissions in the Indian Army, he was even more circumspect as to the method in which they were to be initially posted in regimental units. He was aware that in the army, there was, to a degree seldom found anywhere else in government service, a colour bar. No matter how urbane or gentlemanly or efficient a chief's-college-educated scion of the Indian aristocracy was, there would, feared Chesney, be widespread protest, not only by British officers serving in the Indian Army, but by Anglo-India itself, if any attempt at rapid and wholesale introduction of Indian QCOs were made. To ensure that 'for a great many years to come, Europeans...[would]...not be required to serve under natives', Chesney's proposal stipulated that '[t]he native lieutenant on entering the [Indian] army, would go in as the junior of his regiment'. However, the Military Secretary took pains to point out that this was to be done on a trial basis.

> Supposing one such commission would be given in the first instance, and that the holder of it turned out well, then, when a vacancy occurred in the regiment, then a second young Indian might be appointed, and so on, till eventually, that particular regiment would be officered wholly by Indian gentlemen.[55]

Chesney held out the possibility, in the event of the one Indian-officered regiment doing well, of the expansion of his plan to include other Indian regiments. He advised the C-in-C that the advantage of this plan was that, as the actual performance of Indian QCOs was its sole criterion, it could proceed as gradually or as rapidly as official India desired. However, the important point, as Chesney reminded General Stewart, was that a start had to be made regarding Indianization, if only because 'a beginning of some sort is...safer than standing still'.[56]

Chesney's proposal received the backing of General Stewart, the C-in-C India. Stewart presented the idea to the Viceroy's

Council, the highest decision-making body of the Indian government. After due consideration, the government decided, in March 1885, to forward to the Secretary of State for India in London a plan to 'bring to the attention of Her Majesty's Government the question of appointing Native gentlemen to the commissioned ranks of the army in the same ranks as European officers'. The proposal the Indian government presented to London was similar in tone to Chesney's plan, in that it stressed, first, the necessity of the measure for the continued political support of the princely and aristocratic classes, and second, as an initiative whose time had clearly come.[57]

In its details, however, the government plan differed substantially from Chesney's. Instead of introducing Indian QCOs to a single regiment, it was proposed to post them to two regiments—one cavalry and the other infantry. No doubt, this extension was designed to convince the princes and Indians in general of Anglo-Indian liberality and progressiveness. Yet this was only for appearances' sake, because the two Indianizing regiments would not be regular line regiments of the Indian Army; rather, they would be two 'special regiments' raised specifically for the purpose of Indianization. The despatch justified the creation of the special regiments by stating that Indian aristocrats would find serving in a regular line regiment extremely 'distasteful and irksome'. This line of thought can be analysed in two ways: either official India was saying that service in a regular Indian Army regiment alongside British officers would in some way infringe upon the caste strictures and sensibilities of the princes; or that their distaste and irksomeness would stem from being shunned by their British regimental confreres. Although Anglo-India wanted to believe the former to be the case, in reality they were trying their best to avoid the latter.[58]

Another limitation imposed by the Indian government's plan concerned the officer establishment of the special regiments. Rather than proposing that the special regiments have the regular Indian Army complement of twelve QCOs per unit, their plan proposed that the special regiments follow the standard irregular pattern of three QCOs per unit.[59] Since Calcutta envisaged that it would be some time before Indian gentlemen could be appointed QCOs, it suggested that, in the first instance, the special regiments be staffed by specially selected VCOs from

existing Indian Army units. These VCOs would presumably be chosen from the cadre that had been directly commissioned as *jamadars*.[60] To the three special regiment officers, a fourth would be added—a 'duty doing' officer who would be a native gentleman of good family. This additional position was a temporary measure, to be abolished once a sufficient number of Indian princes and aristocrats could be trained to assume command roles in the regiments. The pay and allowances of these Indian QCOs were to be fixed at two-thirds those of British officers of corresponding rank.[61]

True to the authoritarianism of Anglo-India, the Viceroy and his councillors stated that selection of Indian QCOs should be the Indian government's responsibility, assisted by the C-in-C. Selection was to be based on four criteria: 'personal qualifications, character,[62] social position, and, fitness for a military career'.[63] Clearly, this ordering of attributes indicates that Calcutta viewed Indianization more as a cosmetic political manoeuvre than a measure designed to provide the Indian Army with professionally competent Indian QCOs. Had they intended the latter, then surely 'fitness for a military career' would have been placed first. The despatch justified opting for governmental selection on the grounds that the alternative—selection by competitive examination, as at Sandhurst—would be disastrous. In yet another example of Anglo-Indian constructed 'difference', the government asserted that while it was reasonable to assume that the average English youth who passed the Sandhurst entrance examination would be able to withstand the physical stresses of an officer's life, the same would not be the case with Indian youths. In India, averred the ideology of difference, it was extremely uncommon for a native not from the effete babu class to do well in competitive examinations. And since it was a given that babus were non-martial, if competitive examinations were instituted, then surely one would have an officer corps inundated by babus who would be worthless as leaders of men in battle.[64]

Lord Kimberley,[65] the India Secretary, proceeded very cautiously in dealing with Calcutta's scheme for military Indianization. Realizing that what Calcutta was proposing amounted to nothing less than an 'organic change' in the leadership principle of the Indian Army, he sought the written

counsel of no less than twenty-two high-ranking Anglo-Indian officials, who included among their number no less than three former C-in-Cs of India—Field Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala, and Generals Sir Frederick Haines and Sir Donald Stewart[66]—as well as Sir Ashley Eden, a former Governor of Bengal who had chaired the Indian Army Reorganization Commission of 1879. The collation and consideration of these opinions took time; it also did not help matters that Westminster was undergoing a bout of parliamentary musical chairs in 1885–6, which saw two changes of ministry in less than a year.[67]

Kimberley's response, which was despatched to India in April 1886, can best be described as ambiguous. While the India Secretary seemed to favour the broad sentiments behind appointing Indian QCOs—if only for the rather passive reason that Anglo-India could not indefinitely deny 'natives' a suitable outlet for their military aspirations[68]—his main recommendation was that the Government of India reconsider the special regiment scheme in light of the opinions he had gathered on it.[69] Kimberley reported that although a majority of the officials he consulted had concurred with the general principle of the measure, most recommended that it be modified. In fact, only eight of the respondents opted for acceptance of the Government of India's scheme with modifications, yet, combined with those who recommended it unreservedly, the total came to thirteen—a clear majority. Kimberley was undoubtedly swayed by the fact that some of those who totally rejected the scheme were very senior and influential. Indeed, his principal recommendation was identical to that of Sir Ashley Eden—the scheme's most implacable and vehement foe in London.[70]

Kimberley summarized the objections of his respondents for Calcutta's benefit. He reported that there were six major objections and five minor ones, though the respondents themselves had made no such distinction. The first major objection, however, was his own: would the special regiment plan, which called for a maximum of eight Indian QCOs, adequately meet the 'alleged' political need of opening out to Indians careers in the Queen's Commissioned ranks of the Indian Army? This was a direct reply to Napier of Magdala, who had opined that

> The prospect of rising to the command of a regiment will give a stimulus and encouragement to the Native Army which will be

invaluable, and it would provide for the sons of loyal chiefs and heads of clans an opening in the Army that would secure their warm attachment and bind them to our service.[71]

On the other hand, the India Secretary was aware that any wholesale extension of the scheme such that military openings for Indians were on a par with those available to them in civil life was inadvisable, because of the great danger to the military security of Anglo-India that it would pose. Specifically, as Kimberley made clear in his fifth point, he was concerned that Indian Army units *not* under the complete command of British officers would be susceptible to disaffection or even open revolt, led, no doubt, by their Indian QCOs. Here, he was heeding the dire warnings of Generals Sir Charles Reid and Sir Charles Brownlow. Brownlow, the Military Secretary to the C-in-C of the British Home Army, pointed out that the recent Egyptian rebellion, which had to be put down by a British Expeditionary Force, was led by a native Egyptian Army officer—Colonel Ahmed Arabi. What guarantee was there, asked Brownlow, that a similar uprising would not occur in India when Indians were granted substantive military command?[72] Reid, who had served with distinction during the 1857 uprising, maintained that the main reason the British managed to emerge the victor was 'the absence on the ranks of the mutineers...of any leaders...[with]...military training'. Thus he was unequivocally opposed to the scheme. 'Selecting men as officers from the higher classes [of Indians], educating them, and training them in the arts of war, as many advocate, would make them...dangerous characters, and rather too efficient'.[73]

General Sir Donald Stewart, the former C-in-C who had arrived back in England to take up an appointment with the India Council, offered something constructive on this head. The security concern, he thought, would best be met if the two special regiments were posted to defend the new road link between Dera Ghazi Khan and Pishin, on the Baluchi frontier. He suggested this for two reasons. First of all, the Dera Ghazi Khan–Pishin sector, unlike Waziristan, Tirah, and Swat further north, was a relatively quiet area of the frontier. Therefore Anglo-Indian security would not be negatively affected by any unsatisfactory performance on the part of the special regiments.[74]

The second point Kimberley instructed the Indian authorities to consider was suggested to him by Sir Ashley Eden, one of the most outspoken opponents of the special regiment scheme. Eden took exception to the proposed officer establishment of the special regiments, which, at four, was to be exactly half that of the British-officered units of the Indian Army. Eden construed this to mean, not that Calcutta was trying to minimize the number of Indian QCOs, but that Indian authorities thought that Indian QCOs were twice as good as their British counterparts. This struck Eden—a staunch believer in the superiority of the British 'race'—as an abomination. 'No one', he wrote, 'would pretend to believe for one moment that regiments commanded and officered by natives of India would be equal either in the field or in cantonment, to regiments commanded and officered by British officers.'[75] Moreover, Eden firmly maintained that the presence of British officers in 'native' regiments was essential to 'maintain...the discipline, watch the temper, and control the interior economy of a Native regiment'.[76]

Third, despite the fact that both Chesney and the Indian government had designed the scheme in such a way as to delay, for a very long time, British officers and other ranks from ever having to serve under Indian QCOs, Kimberley and his respondents fastened on this as a major issue. According to General Sir Frederick Haines, who had been C-in-C of India from 1876 to 1881, it was 'an established fact' ordinary sepoys had but little confidence in the command abilities of VCOs. Following from this, Haines asked whether it was realistic to expect British officers, and other ranks, to willingly place themselves under, and 'have one grain of confidence in a Native commanding officer'.[77] This lack of confidence, thought Haines, would surely be detrimental to the efficiency of any unit commanded by Indian QCOs.

General Napier, who as has been seen was a supporter of the special regiment scheme, and General Peter S. Lumsden nevertheless shared Haines' concern. To forestall Indians commanding Britons, Napier suggested that, when they attained colonelcies—the first rank where they would be able to command Britons—they be always junior to their British counterparts.[78] Lumsden's solution was more creative. Warning that

any sudden introduction of Indian QCOs would likely cause discontent on the part of British officers 'similar to that lately shown by [Anglo-India over] the introduction of the Ilbert Bill',[79] Lumsden hit upon a different solution. What he proposed was a system of different rank designations for Indian QCOs in which the commanders of the special regiments would be called 'Commandants' instead of colonels, and the wing officers under them would be designated 'First and Second Wing Commandants', instead of captains or majors.[80]

Kimberley's fourth objection was on financial grounds: was it wise to burden the Indian exchequer, already overtaxed as it was, with two additional regiments, which, since they were to be Indian officered, would be of questionable efficiency? In stating this, Kimberley took the lead from General Stewart, who had recommended, for the very reason of eliminating 'financial strain', that the scheme be tried on two extant units.[81]

Finally, Kimberley doubted Calcutta's contention that there existed, among the Indian upper classes, a real demand for a higher military career. If indeed there was no demand, then Kimberley was concerned that the special regiment scheme would create one, and that satisfying it would, for all the reasons Kimberley had outlined, be exceedingly difficult. This was in direct contradiction to his thoughts of the previous year, when he had written to Dufferin that action on the question of higher military employment for Indians was imperative, especially in view of the fact that an 'Asiatic' had already attained a higher rank in the Russian military.[82] This officer, Colonel Alikhanoff, a Muslim who had been Russianized, was a petty noble from Russian Central Asia. More importantly, from the perspective of Indo-Russian relations, he was a member of the joint commission that had been set up to negotiate the Afghan border, which was one of the key flashpoints in the 'Great Game' that Russia and Britain had been engaged in for the past century.[83] The volatile nature of the negotiations—indeed, there had been a war scare in India when the Russians wrested control of Penjdeh from the Afghans—would, in the minds of many, necessitate the deployment of an Indian field force near the disputed area. If this were done, asked Generals Meade and Bright, how long would it be before news of the Russian policy of granting officer commissions to scions of their central Asian

khanates reached the ears of the sepoys and Indian gentlemen of military bearing? Not long at all; and, once it did, it would inevitably lower British prestige in the eyes of Indians and undoubtedly lead to some disaffection amongst sepoys.[84]

Kimberley's *volte face* on this head was probably due to Eden's influence. Eden, ever the foe of the scheme, rejected Meade's and Bright's thinking. He contended that, while British policy was animated by a forward-looking ideology, aimed at benefiting the subject races, Russia's policy in Central Asia was not. The Tsar's government simply selected certain Central Asian youths of aristocratic lineage, whom they Russianized, trained as officers, and posted to the Russian Army. Eden maintained that such a haphazard policy would be impossible in India, because of caste sensibilities.[85]

Having laid these objections before the Government of India, Kimberley suggested a plan of his own. Almost a carbon copy of General Stewart's plan, it called for the 'experiment' to be tried on the two regiments already authorized to be raised in the Bengal Army. This satisfied Stewart's concern regarding the financial burden. Second, Kimberley adopted Stewart's suggestion that the two regiments be combined into a single corps on a Guides[86] footing, under overall command of a British officer. This would ensure that the units would be carefully monitored and observed by military authorities. Third, like Stewart, he proposed that the special corps be localized on the North West Frontier, to guard the Peshawar–Dhera Ghazi Khan sector. Finally, as a precaution against possible disaffection of British officers who found the prospect of serving with Indian QCOs irksome, Kimberley suggested that Calcutta should, in future consider the possibility of employing the latter in duties 'other than in line'. The postings he had in mind were connected with training and administration of the Indian Army Reserve, which was just then being formed.[87]

Once in India, Kimberley's plan ran into a brick wall of opposition in the person of General Sir Frederick Sleigh Roberts, who had succeeded General Stewart as C-in-C India. Roberts was a dominating figure in the military world of Anglo-India in the late nineteenth century, and he built a reputation which soon passed into British imperial mythology. As a believer in the empire, India's place in it, and the use of the Indian Army to

ensure that India would continue to be a part of it, Roberts was second to very few indeed.[88] The son of an Indian Army officer—General Sir Abraham Roberts—Roberts was commissioned in the Bengal Army in 1852, after passing out of Addiscombe. Apart from service in the Mutiny, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross for valour, he spent most of his early service in the Quarter-Master General's Department, where he became something of an expert in logistics. He rose to prominence when, as Quarter-Master General, he designed the Delhi encampment for Lytton's Imperial Assemblage of 1877.[89] On strength of this Roberts was appointed to field command in the Second Afghan War (1878–80).[90] Here he became a hero, marching from Kabul to Kandahar to defeat the Afghan forces.[91] From 1881 till the time of his appointment as C-in-C India in 1885, he was C-in-C Madras.

In Roberts' opinion, the whole question of higher commissions for Indians was 'exceedingly delicate...[and]...anything but easy'.[92] He had been aware for some time of the issue, and of the possible effect on Indian and sepoy opinion of Alikhanoff. Indeed, he conceded that it might be found neccessary, in the distant future, 'to give natives a certain share of higher appointments' in the Indian Army.[93] Therefore, Roberts was clearly irked at having to consider military Indianization so early in his tenure as C-in-C India. He was also opposed to the direction Kimberley's scheme was imparting to the Indianization issue as a whole. A professional officer, Roberts' main concerns were to maintain the preparedness and fighting efficiency of the Indian Army, and to promote the welfare of the troops under his command. He therefore thought that Kimberley's scheme, which aimed at conferring Queen's Commissions on Indian gentlemen, was a purely political move, that would not be of any real military benefit. Any scheme of real military utility would, in his opinion, have to focus not on Indian gentlemen, but on the real 'martial races', who provided the men for the Indian Army and who manned the VCO class; to do otherwise would be 'short-sighted'.[94]

For Roberts, the issue resolved itself into two main questions: first, whether there existed, within the army, a desire for higher commissions; and second, whether Indians commissioned under the India office scheme would be accepted by British officers

and other ranks. The C-in-C, who considered himself something of an expert on the sepoy, maintained that the main aspiration for 99 per cent of the VCOs was

> to lead a quiet life, steering such a course that would save him from the displeasure of his superior, the British officer.... The summit of such a man's ambition is the highest pension he can receive, and, if he can only serve long enough in the superior [VCO] grades, a few acres of land.[95]

On the second question, Roberts echoed Lumsden's point that, for a long time to come, difficulties would arise 'when Native officers of rank...[were]...placed in any position, where, by virtue of such rank, they would...expect to command British officers and soldiers of junior rank to themselves'.[96] Roberts maintained that these difficulties were essentially based on perceptions of racial difference.

> The strongest possible feeling exists among all ranks of the British Army that natives are neither physically nor morally such good soldiers as themselves...[and that]...until the time was ripe for such a measure, to place a Native Gentleman on an equality with European officers in the Army...would not be impolitic, but dangerous, from the innate inability of the British private soldier to submit to native authority.[97]

That Roberts himself subscribed to this belief is revealed by his statement that recognition of this superiority 'had won India for us'.[98]

But British superiority alone would not account for all the difficulties. Strict adherence to caste restrictions would hinder the Indian QCOs mixing freely with their British brother officers. Such a situation, which would effectively separate Indian QCOs from their British colleagues, would be detrimental to unit cohesion and camaraderie, which Roberts held to be the cornerstones of military efficiency. Another danger was that Indian QCOs were likely to erode the neccessary hierarchical gulf between officers and enlisted men by becoming 'too intimate with their co-religionists serving below them in the regiment'.[99]

To circumvent all these difficulties, Roberts suggested a plan of his own, designed exclusively for VCOs. What he proposed was to appoint a few of the best VCOs[100] to the frontier levies, which were then operating in the Khyber, and which, he hoped, would be raised in Baluchistan and other parts of the frontier

as well. Officered on the irregular system, the frontier levies would offer useful employment for the cream of the VCOs who yearned for command responsibilities. Moreover, Roberts contended that such levies would be a valuable nucleus that could be expanded for garrisoning frontier stations in time of war, thereby releasing regular troops for frontline duty. The C-in-C was clear that these Indian-commanded levies were to be raised on an experimental basis initially. Only gradually were the most trustworthy and efficient of them to be given a less irregular establishment and formed into regiments.[101]

Roberts was against giving British rank and titles to Indian officers commanding these levies; doing so would, in his opinion, only lead to situations of clashing authority and awkward questions about the position of Indian officers relative to British officers. Therefore, he proposed that the officer commanding would be called 'Commandant', the second-in-command '*naib*-Commandant', and the adjutant '*bakshi*'. Roberts saw three main advantages to this plan. First, the irregular establishment of the levies would be more economical than regular units and thus it was cheaper than either Stewart's or Kimberley's plans, which called for a regular establishment. Second, Roberts averred that if his frontier levy plan failed for whatever reason, the risk to the security of British India would be slight, from the point of view of a diminution of military efficiency. Third, the plan would 'show to what extent a general wish existed [among the "native" ranks] for a more extended military career'.[102]

By this time, the Indian vernacular press, which was the mouthpiece of Indian babu intelligentsia, had begun running stories and editorials on higher commissions for Indians. As part of a general concern with military affairs, newspapers such as *Surabhi* and *Sadharani* of Bengal and *Swadesamitran* of Madras reported the details of the two-regiment scheme, and urged Whitehall to approve it.[103] The year 1885 also saw the formation of the Indian National Congress: a coalescing of educated and middle-class Indian opinion into an all-India political organization. In its early years, Congress was a moderate organization. It was led by English-educated Indians who had gained prominence in the new professions—most notably law[104]—and whose ideological leanings were liberal,

thus firmly believing in constitutional methods of agitation and reform. Thus 'the purpose of Congress politics [in this formative phase] was the modest goal of enlarging Indian participation in government decision-making and administration, rather than reshaping political institutions in a way which would express India's essential being or national character'.[105] The Congress displayed an interest in military affairs from its inaugural session. In its first three annual sessions, it passed four resolutions dealing with military aspects of the Raj. One of these, calling for higher commissions for Indians, will be examined in the following pages.[106]

Dufferin's reaction to this was to try to counteract the increasingly vociferous babu criticism by placating the sensibilities of the martial classes. What the Viceroy had in mind was to grant honorary Queen's Commissions to certain outstanding VCOs. This struck Roberts as 'a step in the right direction', as it offered the opportunity to raise the military status of Indians of the martial races without requiring them to compete with British officers. The C-in-C thought that these honorary commissions should be given either as rewards for outstanding service or as a sop to Indian aristocrats, in order to bind them more closely with Calcutta.[107]

Dufferin responded to the India Office in August 1887, that the scheme devised by Stewart and Kimberley, though laudable in intent, was impossible to implement at the present time because of financial considerations. One wonders if he even took into account the fact that India Secretary Kimberley's scheme, by stipulating that the two Indianizing units be taken from the existing establishment, was precisely designed *not* to incur additional expenditure. In *lieu* of it, Calcutta proposed that honorary ranks of Lieutenant Colonel, Major, or Captain—carrying all the privileges of substantive rank, except that of command—be conferred on selected VCOs. Selection would be the responsibility of either the C-in-C India, or the C-in-Cs Madras or Bombay. The choices of the latter two, however, would have to be additionally approved by their respective provincial governments. The nominations of all three C-in-Cs would, after approval by the Viceroy-in-Council be transmitted to the India Secretary, who would submit them for royal approval. Grant of these honorary commissions was to be

officially notified in the *London Gazette*, according to the practice then obtaining for substantive Queen's Commissions.[108]

In London, Lord Cross,[109] India Secretary in Salisbury's new Conservative government, doubted that the honorary commission scheme would satisfy the military ambitions of VCOs. Rather, to the contrary, Cross maintained that 'to bestow on a Native regimental officer, titulary merely, a high grade of British rank, which shall in every essential be subordinate to the lowest grade borne of a British officer of the same battalion, would...[instead of]...raising his military status, actually emphasise his inferiority'.[110] It was for this reason that Cross stipulated that VCOs be granted honorary commissions extra-regimentally only, as aides-de camp or orderly officers. Not to do so, he wrote, would surely raise the spectre of disaffection, which was the last thing either London or Calcutta wanted.[111]

Yet Cross was also aware that there were only a limited number of extra-regimental billets in the Indian Army, where the Indian honorary commissioned officers could be posted. To ameliorate any possible difficulties in this regard, Cross resurrected Kimberley's idea of employing them in the Indian Army Reserve, where they would form a special class of District Reserve and Recruiting Officers. Here, they would essentially be glorified recruiting officers, periodically touring the recruiting districts within their circle, 'where it might be anticipated that their example would have a beneficial effect upon recruiting generally'.[112] While there is no evidence that Cross' recommendation was ever acted upon, Dufferin's idea bore fruit. In January 1888, Aslam Khan was granted the rank of Honorary Major, in recognition of his military service, and, for political reasons, Maharaja Pratap Singh of Kashmir was appointed Honorary Colonel of the 37th Dogras.[113]

III

Chesney, now Military Member of the Viceroy's Council, was not daunted by the gradual whittling down to nothing of his original 1885 proposal. He still believed that military Indianization was an important goal—one which 'ought not to

be lost sight of', especially in light of the new political realities that had emerged since he had put forward his original plan nearly three years earlier.[114] Here, he was clearly speaking about the continued existence, despite governmental opposition, of the Indian National Congress. More importantly, at its third session, held at Madras in December 1887, Congress had passed a resolution that

> the Military Service in its higher grades should be practically opened to the natives of this country, and that the Government of India should establish military colleges in this country, whereas the natives of India, as defined by statute, may be educated and trained for a military career as officers of the Indian Army.[115]

Resolutions of this kind, spurred on by editorials in the native press[116] that had possibly reached the ears of sepoys, made it clear to the Military Member that something had to be done before 'definite agitation...[arose]...on this head'.[117]

In his new proposal, Chesney answered those who criticized the 1885 scheme because it ignored the claims of sepoys, and especially VCOs presently in the army. Yet Chesney reminded official India that the VCO class was becoming increasingly more diverse as a result of the new policy of direct commissions to the lowest rank of the VCO class. This resulted in the entry of a better category of martial race Indians into the VCO class, no doubt attracted by the prospect—offered by direct commissioning—of not having to spend long years in the sepoy ranks before attaining native officer rank.[118] But Chesney reasoned that mere Viceroy Commissions would only serve to whet the appetites of some of those directly commissioned for higher command, which necessarily meant the Queen's Commission. But to gain the Queen's Commission, the Military Member maintained that English education was an essential prerequisite. 'A man may have all the military instinct, [he wrote] but until he can transact regimental business in the English language, and study his profession in it, he cannot take his place alongside the British officer.[119]

To meet the aspirations of both the Indian higher classes and rank-and-file VCOs, Chesney proposed a two-tiered plan. The first tier of this plan called for the creation of a military college, at which Indians directly commissioned as *jamadars*—who,

according to Chesney, were developing an awareness of the wider world beyond the parade ground—and sons of Indian gentlemen and aristocrats would receive a military education in English. The logical career option for Indian cadets so trained would be Queen's Commissions in the Indian Army; for cadets from princely India, however, Chesney hoped that postings would be found in the Imperial Service Contingents then in the process of being formed in various princely states. Indeed, he averred that, in the latter case, the increased efficiency of the native states' forces would be an added benefit.[120]

Chesney recognized that the question of posting cadets from British India was a thorny one, accepting as quite valid the objections of many officials in both London and Calcutta that the method he had proposed three years earlier would engender social difficulties arising from having Indians in the regimental mess. What he proposed now, as 'perhaps a better plan' was, in some respects, no less radical: that, instead of gradually Indianizing selected units through a system of promotion and seniority, a certain portion of the Indian Army be organized so as to be officered, right from the start, wholly by Indians. Initially, the senior officers of these units would be selected from the ranks of the long-serving *subedar* and *risaldar*-Majors, while the junior officers would be appointed from the young men who had graduated from the military college. As the senior VCOs retired, their posts would be filled by military-college-graduated officers. The only British officers in the units so organized were to be the Commandant and his second-in-command, but this was only to be in the initial phase of the experiment.[121] The main idea of the plan, although Chesney never said so, was the segregation of Indian QCOs to an even more complete extent than had been the case in his first proposal.

As regards the military college itself, Chesney was of the opinion that, as the officers who graduated from it were to serve solely in the Indian Army, it should be located in India. In keeping with 'difference', Chesney argued that training in England would necessarily require the Indian to be 'cut adrift from home associations and influences, when after all, he is coming back to command native troops in this country'.[122] By the same token, it would have made sense for British officers opting for the Indian service to have done part of their training

in India, but such logic does not seem to have struck the Military Member. Cadets to the military college were to be selected by nomination, on the basis of 'promise and character', by the provincial governments in the case British-Indian cadets, and by the Foreign Department[123] of the Indian government in the case of cadets from princely India. The competitive examination alternative, which, if adopted, would lead to babu predominance in an area in which they had little ability, was to be avoided in this way.[124]

The second tier of Chesney's plan focused on the vast majority of VCOs who had attained that grade through long years of service. Chesney perceived that the VCO class was stagnating after the 1857 uprising. This stagnation was due to the fact that they were increasingly shut out of responsible command positions within units by the influx of British officers. A pre-1857 Indian cavalry squadron had had only three British officers, which meant that the risaldar was, for all practical purposes, a squadron commander; but after the uprising, the complement of British officers in a regiment of Indian cavalry rose to nine, and risaldars were relegated to leading only troops. In order to increase the morale and contentment of the VCO class, especially in the Indian cavalry, Chesney proposed that, as far as officer establishment went, regiments be divided into two wings: one to be officered on the old system, with just three British officers, and VCOs commanding squadrons and companies; and the other on the new system, with nine British officers.[125]

For younger VCOs who had risen from the ranks—jamadars still in their twenties, for instance—Chesney held out the possibility of attending the military college. For them, it would serve as more of a staff college, to round out their practical experience. Indeed, Chesney thought that this would only be a slight enlargement of what was already being done at the Roorkee training school, where a small class of VCOs and Indian NCOs were being given training in the rudiments of staff work, and displayed a 'remarkable aptitude' for sketching and surveying.[126] Chesney felt confident that

> by giving selected native officers training at a military college, and especially instructing them in English, their ignorance... [which is]... the great difficulty at present in the way of their getting any military education at all, we should certainly increase their efficiency, and

it would be possible to select the most promising for higher promotion.[127]

As ever Chesney was aware of this plan's potential danger to Anglo-Indian security, but he argued that it was 'far more dangerous to stand still than to advance, to maintain a policy of repression than to enter on [*sic*] a policy of trust'. His plan would do just that, by allowing Indians of both the princely states and British India to feel that 'military advancement...[was]...bounded only by the limit of capacity and conduct'.[128]

Chesney was worried that his new plan, despite the attention it paid to the sepoys, and especially the VCO class, would meet the opposition of General Roberts. Therefore, he chose to table the proposal in the Viceroy's Council during one of the C-in-C's absences.[129] The Council, dominated by liberals—Roberts later termed them a 'radical element'—approved of the Military Member's plan. Normally, the measure would, at that point, have been despatched to London. But Roberts, who thought Chesney's desire to establish an 'Indian Sandhurst' was purely motivated by the Military Member's personal and careerist concerns, was able to prevail upon Dufferin to delay action until he received Roberts' views on the plan.[130]

In a memorandum dated 18 May 1888, Roberts outlined his objections to this new scheme of Chesney's. Claiming that the Military Member was giving too much credence to the 'truculent, seditious, and ill-informed press clamouring for native control of the Army',[131] he averred that Chesney did not adequately consider the political and military ramifications of what he was proposing. To Roberts, Chesney ignored the one central question raised by his proposal: that of leadership; and to him, this was an area of ineradicable racial difference between the Englishman and the Indian. Although the C-in-C held that the bravery of the sepoy was indisputable, he nevertheless maintained

> that the force and strength of leadership are an attribute of race. The power of dominating the wills of men, that carries them forward in battle and controls them in quarters, belongs to the stronger nature; and, speaking as I am, not in public, but in the council chamber, it is not a vainglorious boast to claim for the British race a superiority over other races in the quality of command...There are [Indian] races

as brave as the British, but they have not the faculty of command in the same degree.[132]

Roberts also poured cold water on the civil analogy. The admission of Indians into the Indian Army's officer corps had 'no parallel' with their admission into the covenanted civil service, because of the 'peculiar idiosyncrasies of the British soldier'.[133] He argued that

> the Native officer, however carefully he may have been educated and however clever he may be, will never be looked upon by the British soldier as one fit to be his commander. The youngest [British] recruit thinks himself infinitely superior as a soldier to the highest born and most powerful native in the land. The same conviction exists throughout the commissioned ranks, and though the superior education and more gentlemanly instincts of the [British] officer would probably enable him to conceal this feeling, while...on ordinary peace duties, it would never stand the test of service, and show itself on the first occasion...on which the Native was found wanting.[134]

Therefore, Chesney's measure, if implemented, would cause great embarrassment to British officers and, quite possibly, lead to insubordination among British troops, thereby resulting in wholesale collapse of the Anglo-Indian military system. This was why Roberts hoped that higher commissions for Indians 'may never be introduced in our Army'.[135]

Roberts' interpretation of British officers' attitudes towards the possibility of having Indians as colleagues is curiously at variance with what he himself had recorded three years earlier. At that time, he reported to Lord Randolph Churchill, then India Secretary, that British officers with whom he had spoken had found Chesney's two-regiment scheme not as distasteful as Roberts had anticipated they would.[136] That British officers could have so stiffened their opposition to the idea of Indian QCOs in a scant three years seems implausible. What is closer to the truth is that Roberts, himself implacably opposed to military Indianization, sought to magnify British officers' opposition to it, in the hope that the members of the Viceroy's Council would reject it outright.

The C-in-C had other problems with the proposal as well. If the 'native' gentlemen trained and commissioned in the army were found wanting, he contended that they could not be dismissed without provoking a furore in Indian public opinion.

And, assuming that Indian lieutenants would be posted to units organized on the British pattern, he envisioned the abolition of the VCO class. This would necessarily result in the alienation from the Raj of most of the martial Indian communities upon whom the Indian Army was so dependent in manpower terms. He was also leery of Chesney's advocacy of military training for VCOs. He feared that,

> if commissions [as jamadar] in the Army are in the future to require a high standard of education, the ranks of the Army will suffer, both in quantity and quality, and we shall look in vain, when too late, for that type of recruit which has done us such good service under the British officer.[137]

Finally, Roberts was worried that, if Indians were indeed granted Queen's Commissions, it would be dangerous to train them in staff work, for while this would better their ability to understand the workings of the Raj's military system, it would also mean that they would be better able to detect any weakness in the British military position. That Roberts was still deeply distrustful of Indians is demonstrated by his contention that staff training would help disaffected Indian officers lead another uprising, or, at the very least, induce them to sell military secrets to the highest bidder—possibly the Russians.[138]

Faced with such opposition from the hero of the Second Afghan War, Chesney's proposal fared badly in Council. Dufferin accepted the C-in-C's views in toto, and two other councillors, convinced by Roberts' views to change sides, now opposed the proposal. Chesney, Aitchison, and Murray, who still supported the scheme, were now in minority. Because of this, the Military Member withdrew the proposal, saying, however, that he did not think the Council was right in leaving the matter like that, and that he felt 'that it ought to be brought under the general consideration again before long'.[139] The verdict was a great relief to the C-in-C. 'I cannot conceive', he penned,

> of anything more likely to drive us prematurely out of India than the placing of the Army in the hands of natives.... It is the want of leadership that has given us India, and why should we go out of our way to provide it? I hear no clamour on the part of the press, and my firm belief is that natives of rank, wealth, and position have no desire to enter the Army.[140]

However, he conceded that if such a desire was found to exist, and was thought too dangerous to ignore, a start might be made. But he was against making it easy for Indians to actually gain the Queen's Commission, which would only result in their becoming 'an intolerable nuisance'. He therefore recommended that all 'native' gentlemen desirous of officer commissions should receive training either at Sandhurst or Woolwich.[141]

IV

The C-in-C's hopes that the Indianization issue would not arise 'for many a day'[142] were in vain, for, two years after Chesney's second proposal had been killed in Council, the matter was again up for consideration. Early in 1890, the Punjab government forwarded to Calcutta a plan to introduce a course of military training at Aitchison College, Lahore (one of the Chiefs' schools). Concurrently with this, Chesney made yet another proposal on Indianization. This time, he advocated providing military education—consisting of military surveying, field fortification, and tactics—to a small proportion of younger VCOs from the Indian gentlemanly classes who had a modicum of education. Chesney envisaged that graduates of this course would only be posted to Imperial Service contingents.[143]

Though Roberts felt that implementing such a scheme would not cause too much difficulty, and would be a sufficient advance as far as Indianization was concerned, he was worried by Chesney's assertion that it was only the beginning. Naturally, Roberts thought such talk of 'beginnings' was fraught with danger from the military policy perspective. 'Once [you] introduce anything but regimental training on however limited a scale', he maintained, 'you are on the high road to an Indian Sandhurst and an Indian Staff College'.[144]

Contrary to Chesney's contention that all that 'natives' required to become commissioned officers was education, Roberts now argued that no matter how high you elevated the intellectual powers of the Indian, he would be useless as a military officer because he had not been morally elevated as well. Chesney, according to the C-in-C, ignored the 'fact' that morality was non-existent among 'natives', and he contended

that 'we should not be undermining the security of our Empire by imparting a high class [of] military education to a body of men, who, at present...are deficient in that high sense of honour and possess neither that self-reliance or impartiality which distinguish the British officer'.[145]

The Military Member's insistence on education was, according to Roberts, also faulty from the point of view of the martial races policy, which, by this time, was firmly in place as the recruiting strategy of the Indian Army. 'In India', Roberts argued, the least warlike races possess the highest intellectual capabilities. The Goorkhas[*sic*] and Pathans, and to a lesser extent, the Sikhs, are notoriously as averse to mental exertion as they are fond of manly sports, as apt to fight as they are slow to learn; and if education, including a knowledge of English were to become the chief criterion of fitness for military command, the most desirable candidates in other respects would either decline to attempt, or fail to pass, the prescribed test.[146]

Roberts also tried to refute Chesney's contention that the two planks of his opposition—namely that, on the one hand, 'natives' were unfit for higher military command and responsibility, while on the other, that it was dangerous to allow able 'natives' to assume higher command—were inconsistent. He asserted that

> ...a man might be quite clever enough to be a great danger to us, and capable of organising a mutiny, without possessing that self-reliance and those qualities of command which would gain him the respect of our soldiers, and fit him to lead his regiment against a European enemy.[147]

Here, once again, Roberts was confusing the issue. Never once did Chesney state that Indian higher officers should lead men against a European enemy, but Roberts, by raising this spectre, again capitalized on the inherent sense of insecurity that characterized Anglo-Indian perceptions in varying degrees during the Raj. After all, war with Russia over Penjdeh had been a very real possibility only five years before, and, in the interests of vigilance, the Indian Army, as the first line of defence against such an invasion, would have to be maintained in perfect fighting trim.

Roberts, therefore, felt fully justified in his opposition to Chesney's proposal. He felt that the Military Member himself

had given his position additional weight by admitting that native officers, no matter how highly educated, were more likely to be guided by self-interest rather than by patriotism. Indeed, he held that

> in a country like India, the inhabitants of which are of various nationalities and religions, without common aspirations or common patriotism, it . . . [is] . . . the bounden duty of Government to maintain the predominance of British officers, both military and civil, not only in our own interests as rulers of an Empire which was gained and can only be held by the sword, but as a guarantee of the impartiality and integrity of our administration, an encouragement to loyalty, and an incentive to moral as well as material progress among those subject to our rule.[148]

Indians too, realized the benefits of British rule, and recognized that certain posts, including that of QCO in the Indian Army, were 'properly reserved for the governing race'.[149] In an imperial age which depended, fundamentally, on the superiority of one race over another, it is easy to understand why Roberts was able to sway the Viceroy's Council to reject the plans of both Chesney and the Punjab Government.[150]

But later that same year—1890—Chesney again raised the question, by placing before the C-in-C for consideration a letter from Sir Theodore Beck, Principal of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, which was located at Aligarh in the United Provinces. In this letter, dated 8 August 1890, Beck called for the provision of a military career for the scions of martial Muslim families, and contrasted British policy with Russian by bringing up the Alikhanoff example. Beck was clearly motivated by the fear that the Hindu-dominated Congress had grabbed the early lead in agitating for higher government employment for its members, and that Muslims were consequently being shut out. Higher military employment, suggested Beck, would constitute a welcome sign that Calcutta had not forgotten about its Muslim subjects. Beck also warned that unless the more intelligent Muslims got advantages similar to those gained by the Congress and Hindus, there was every likelihood that they would turn to agitational methods or outright disaffection.[151]

Roberts, however, stuck to his guns. He informed Chesney that Beck's proposal was impractical, because it only favoured

Muslims. To act upon it, therefore, would provoke a veritable hornet's nest of protest from other martial races—particularly the Sikhs and the Gurkhas. He also reiterated his opinion that Indians lacked in sufficient quantity the moral fibre necessary for higher command. Why else, in the early days of the Company, would Indian rulers have procured the services of European mercenaries such as Perron and De Boigne?[152] And to Beck's assertion that the Muslim gentry felt slighted by the military system then extant, because their position in it represented a significant diminution of the military status and prestige that they had enjoyed before British advent, Roberts replied that the 'native' gentry's desire for high military employment was only a recent phenomenon, and that the present outcry for military service was mainly fictitious. In his considered opinion, it was mainly based on exaggerated notions of the success of the agitation over Indian Civil Service employment, and was the brainchild of 'the misguided Englishmen and Hindus who direct the machinations of the National Congress'.[153]

In April 1891, Chesney retired from the Indian Army and returned to England. Though Roberts later praised the former Military Member as a 'personal friend', with whom he had worked 'most harmoniously', at the time he was most probably glad to see the last of the man and his schemes for an Indian Sandhurst.[154]

V

The debates on military Indianization in large measure initiated by Chesney reveal much about Anglo-India's ideological formulations. From the Anglo-Indian point of view, military Indianization revolved around two questions, which had ideological implications. The first was whether or not 'Natives' of India possessed the capacity for military leadership to the same degree as did Britons. The second question, which was contingent on a positive answer to the first, concerned the method by which Indian QCOs were to be integrated into the military system of the Raj in a way that would bolster—or at the very least, not threaten—the continuance of British rule over the subcontinent. These two questions were mediated by the tensions between

similarity and difference. Though it has been earlier stated that an ideology of 'difference' permeated Anglo-India during the period of Crown rule, this was not consistent. Had it been so, the discourse on military Indianization would never have arisen. Chesney, in his four schemes, stressed a modicum of similarity between Englishmen and Indians, in that he thought the latter essentially resembled the English in that they had the capacity to be 'intelligent agents', but that they were at an earlier stage of political and educational development—hence his comparison of the Indian 'native aristocracy' to the Scots highlanders of the early to mid-eighteenth century. Yet he also believed in the ineluctable difference between Briton and Indian, by subscribing to the martial races concept. We can see this quite clearly in his 1885 scheme, which targeted Indian gentlemen, who were classified as the upper classes of the martial peoples of India, as well as in his later schemes, which were directed at sepoys and VCOs who, naturally, were from good martial stock.

Chesney was also motivated by political concerns. In particular, the presence of the Asiatic officer Alikhanoff in the Russian Army provoked a fear in official Anglo-India that martial Indians from both the Indian Army and the Indian aristocracy would mount 'definite agitation' to gain entry into the Queen's Commissioned ranks. The reason this fear loomed large was because of the special place the martial races and the Indian aristocracy occupied in the collaborative structure of the Raj. So important was the need to ascertain that the latter would continue to support the Raj that within a decade after Chesney's retirement from India, an Imperial Cadet Corps was instituted to give selected Indian aristocrats and gentlemen a three-year course of military education. Graduates of this course were granted commissions in His Majesty's Native Indian Land Forces, which would entitle them not to officer posts in line units of the Indian Army, but only to extra-regimental posts, as aides-de-camp or orderly officers, or in the Imperial Service contingents, as Lord Cross had suggested.[155]

Pragmatism also characterized the evolution of Chesney's schemes. One of the reasons the first plan he proposed was shot down was that it did not cater to sepoys and especially VCOs. But Chesney, in his second plan—the two-tiered one—and in

the other two he proposed, was attentive to the aspirations of Indian rank-and-file. This tension was to continue long after Chesney's retirement. In 1910, Sir Arthur Hirtzel, chairman of the India Office's Political Department, commented that the most recent military Indianization scheme emanating from Calcutta catered only to the 'gilded youth of India', while completely ignoring 'the men who really mattered': the VCOs and the classes they represented.[156] The dispute was finally settled by the Indian government in 1917 by including both Indians of 'high birth, character, and education', as well as sepoys and VCOs, in a list of classes deemed eligible for commissions as higher officers.[157] Yet, although some pragmatism was involved in this decision, it conformed to Anglo-Indian ideology by focusing only on the martial races, thereby ignoring the bulk of the demands for military Indianization, which were deemed illegitimate because of their source: 'umartial' babu India.

The question of what kind of postings and powers of command Indian officers were to receive was of prime importance to Anglo-Indian officials. The basic problem was the Anglo-Indian presumption that British QCOs and other ranks would never consent to taking orders from an Indian. In fact, what some influential officials like Eden and Roberts probably feared most was the recurrence of a situation similar to that of the 'White Mutiny' of the late 1850s, which involved white troops of the EIC's forces, long relied upon to be a source of strength to Anglo-India; and Lumsden brought up the anti-Ilbert Bill agitation as a more recent example of what could happen if Anglo-Indians perceived a threat from liberalizing measures. One of the most innovative solutions to this problem was put forward by General Sir Beauchamp Duff, the Military Secretary at the India Office, in 1910. Duff saw the problem as a matter of race and prestige. If British officers of the Indian Army thought that serving with Indians would lower the prestige of their units, Duff suggested that the problem could be solved by posting Indians first to the most prestigious regiments of the *British Army*: the Household Cavalry and Guards regiments. The message would thus be sent to British officers of the Indian Army to the effect that, if Indians were accepted 'without prejudice' as officers of the most prestigious regiments, then

what was wrong with their being posted to regiments of the Indian Army? Despite the fact that Duff's scheme was designed for the most aristocratic of the martial Indians—those who, having graduated from the ICC, were dissatisfied with their extra-regimental billets[158]—it came to nothing.[159]

Security concerns loomed large in Anglo-India, and because of this, the very thought of granting Indians higher commissions filled some, like Generals Napier and Brownlow, with dread. Because of this, attempts at Indianization were always 'experimental'. Chesney initially proposed that only one regiment be Indianized, and Stewart's emendation of this envisioned Indianizing only two units. Indeed, six was the highest number of units it was ever proposed to 'experimentally Indianize' in the pre-1917 period.[160] Because of security, all the schemes adumbrated between 1885 and 1917 displayed a remarkable continuity regarding the posting of Indian QCOs. Chesney's scheme called for posting them from the bottom up, with an Indian subaltern being posted to the bottom-most rung of the unit. On the basis of his performance, as he was steadily promoted up the officer ranks, other subalterns would be posted to the regiment. This meant that only after twenty-five years would the seniormost Indian attain battalion command. This arrangement was identical to that proposed by Sir Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Indian government in 1915.[161] It was also the method adopted by Anglo-Indian military authorities when Indianization began in the years after 1917.

Endnotes

1. The terms 'Anglo-India' and 'Anglo-Indian' are used in their historical sense, that is to denote the British community in India. This chapter distils and develops certain themes of my doctoral thesis, 'A Grudging Concession: the Origins of the Indianization of the Indian Army's Officer Corps, 1817–1917', unpublished Ph.D., McGill University, 1996. I presented a much-condensed version at WHA 99: The Eighth Annual World History Association International Conference, held at the University of Victoria, Canada, in June 1999. The History Department of Plattsburgh State University of New York kindly financed my travel and registration expenses connected with the conference. I would also like to thank the Shastri Indo-Canadian

Institute for awarding me a fellowship to do research in India in 1997. A happy by-product of this award was that I met Professor P. S. Gupta, Kaushik Roy, and Anirudh Deshpande, which resulted in the genesis of the present volume. I would also like to thank Professor Shereen Ratnagar, Dr Ram Rattan, Col. Gautam Sharma, and the Drs Mehrotra for their support, friendship, and encouragement during my stay in India. It is indeed unfortunate that Professor Gupta passed away before this book could reach fruition. Indian history is much the poorer because of his passing. It is in recognition of this that I humbly dedicate this chapter to his memory.

2. Lt. Gen. Sir George Chesney, Military Education for the Natives of India, 12 June 1888, para. 5, British Library (Oriental and India Office Collections) (hereafter: BL(OIOC)) L/MIL/17/5/2202; Sir George Chesney, Memorandum on Sir Ashley Eden's Memoranda (6 July 1885 and 20 May 1886), 20 May 1886, para. 3, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019.

3. Memorandum by Sir Ashley Eden on the Government of India's Despatch No. 47, dated 21 March 1885 (on native officers), 6 July 1885, para. 7 in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1723.

4. For the full text of the proclamation, see: Cyril Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858 to 1947: Select Documents*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, pp. 10–11; Chesney's 1894 remark can be found in his book, *Indian Polity: The System of Administration in India*, 3rd edition, Concept, Delhi, 1976, p. 268.

5. Lord Curzon, Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy upon Commissions for Native Officers, 4 June 1900, para. 5 in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1750.

6. Most published works dealing with military Indianization see it as beginning with India Secretary Montagu's House of Commons statement on 20 Aug. 1917, removing 'the bar which has hitherto precluded the admission of Indians to commissioned rank in His Majesty's Army'. Yet what they overlook is that the 1917 statement was the outcome of a long and complex debate stretching far back into the nineteenth century, which largely determined the course of military Indianization policy post-1917. However, one must also recognize that the GoI adopted full-blown military Indianization only in 1940. For Montagu's declaration, see Great Britain Parliament, *Debates (Commons), 5th Series, vol. XCVII*, col. 1695. For the 1940 policy move, which stated that because of the rapid wartime expansion of the Indian Army, 'all units of the Indian Army...will be thrown open to Indian Commissioned Officers. The principle of having certain purely Indianized units will now be abandoned, and Indian Commissioned Officers will be available for posting throughout the Indian Army, where[ever]

their services can best be used'. See GoI, Army Department, Press Communiqué, 17 June 1940, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19112.

7. D. M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in Early Nineteenth Century India, 1819–1835*, I. B. Tauris, London, 1995, ch. 1, passim. With the work of Peers and others, like Seema Alavi, David Omissi, Peter Stanley, and the contributors to this volume, issues which, like Anglo-Indian militarism, deal with war and society in colonial India are beginning to make historiographical impact. Through this attention, the key role the Indian Army played in the expansion and consolidation of the British empire in South Asia is being recognized.

8. John Malcolm, *The Political History of India from 1784 to 1823*, John Murray, vol. II, London, 1823, p. 245.

9. Note by Sir Ashley Eden, 8 Feb. 1886, para. 3 in Enclosures to Secretary of State for India's Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

10. According to Jürgen Österhammel, collaboration involves a convergence between the colonial state seeking to attain objectives at minimal cost by using the extant structures of the indigenous society, and the members of that society itself trying to develop survival strategies in their confrontation with the colonial state. 'Colonial collaboration entails a degree of reciprocity. The collaborators anticipate an elevation of their personal status, financial gain, or security that the colonial state will provide protection against their rivals. Seen from one perspective,...collaboration seems like ingratiation to the colonial state, but it can also be viewed as a traditional quest for patronage.' See Jürgen Österhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Markus Wiener, Princeton, 1997, pp. 65–6; See also Ronald Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: A Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in R. Bowen and B. Sutcliffe (eds), *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, Longmans, London, 1972. Although Robinson's theory of collaboration has come in for some criticism, most notably by David Arnold, who maintains that it is reductionist and pejorative in its connotations and associations, it nevertheless is a useful shorthand for describing the relationship between certain sections of the indigenous population and the colonial state. Arnold's reservations seem all the more arcane because he does not provide a viable non-reductionist alternative. See David Arnold, 'Bureaucratic Recruitment and Subordination in Colonial India: The Madras Constabulary, 1859–1947', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985.

11. See GoI, Army Department, *The Army in India and Its Evolution: Including an Account of the Establishment of the Royal Air Force in India*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1924, pp. 14, 195, 199. In the first two examples, the heading British troops comprised both the Company's European units, as well as units of the British home army posted to India.

12. Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India, vol. III, no. 4, Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. x–xi.

13. Metcalf's conceptualization eschews the essentializing occidentalism of post-colonial scholars—in the fields of literary and cultural theory, history, and anthropology—who, taking their lead from Edward Said, postulate the existence of a grand 'Orientalist' project on the part of the western imperial powers, to first construct, and then exercise hegemony over the Asian 'other'. Central to this project was the acquisition of knowledge about that 'other'. See Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978; Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992; Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997; Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989; Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992; and the almost impenetrable writings of Homi Babha and Gayatri Spivak. A good critique of these authors from an empiricist historical perspective is Dane Kennedy, 'Post-Colonial Theory and Imperial History', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 24, no. 3, Sept. 1996. Also see Susan Bayly's perceptive and nuanced piece, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', in Peter Robb (ed.), *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995.

14. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. x–xi.

15. On the strand of Orientalist thought voiced by Jones and his colleagues, see the essays in the first four volumes of *Asiatick Researches* (1788–94), especially Jones' own 'On the Origins and Families of Nations', *Asiatick Researches*, vol. 3, 1792, pp. 479–92. Other useful sources pertaining to this topic include: S. N. Mukerjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth Century British Attitudes to India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968; Om Prakash Kejariwal, *The Asiatick Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784–1838*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988; and Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's History of British India and Orientalism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, pp. 11–46.

16. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 33–5.

17. Lawrence felt that this was especially true in a country like India, which had 'been accustomed to see military merit awarded, and...[had seen the]...successive rise of families from lowest [to the highest] conditions, owing to gallantry in the field'. See Henry Lawrence, 'The Military Defence of Our Empire in the East', *Calcutta Review*, vol. II, no. 3, 1844, p. 51. Interestingly, this stance finds resonance in the modern historiography of colonial South Asia. See, for instance Stewart Gordon, *The New Cambridge History of India, vol. II, no. 4: The Marathas, 1600–1818*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 16–17.

18. In this connection, Lawrence mentioned that Dokul Singh, once a drill-*naik* in a sepoy battalion of the Bengal Army, was now at Lahore, a general in the Sikh forces, and that Rajah Buktawar Singh, the commander of the Nawab of Awadh's cavalry, had been a *havildar* in a cavalry unit of the Bengal Army. See Lawrence, 'The Military Defence of Our Empire in the East', p. 50. So powerful was Buktawar Singh that, when the Awadhi artillery corps rebelled because they had not been paid, he came to the rescue of the Nawab, whose treasury was empty, by settling the arrears out of his own personal fortune. See D. P. Sinha, *British Relations with Oudh, 1801–1856: A Case Study*, K. P. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1983, pp. 188–9.

19. Lawrence, 'The Military Defence of Our Empire in the East', pp. 50–1.

20. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. x; see also Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968; James Fitzjames Stephen, 'The Government of India', *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 80, Oct. 1883, pp. 537–50; Henry S. Maine, *Village Communities in East and West*, Henry Holt, London, 1871; and Alfred C. Lyall, *The Rise and Expansion of British Dominion in India*, Scribner's, New York, 1894.

21. Stephen to *The Times*, 4 Jan. 1878.

22. On the idea of progress in nineteenth-century Europe, see, Michael Biddiss, 'Progress, Prosperity, and Positivism: Cultural Trends at Mid-Century', in Bruce Waller (ed.), *Themes in Modern European History, 1830–1890*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1990; and Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism in the Dark Continent*, St. Martin's, New York, 1961, esp. ch. 1.

23. Despite this, Metcalf almost ignores it in his otherwise excellent book. See *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 125–7, 184.

24. Lt. Col. Sir George F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India*, Sterling, Delhi, 1988 (reprint of 1911 edition), p. 129. A career officer of the Indian Army, MacMunn eventually rose to be Quartermaster-General. He also considered himself something of an ethnographic expert, as evidenced by his book, *The Martial Races of India*, Sampson, Low and Marston, London, 1935.

25. Henry Bevan, *Thirty-One Years in India, or, A Soldiers' Reminiscences of Native and European Life in the Presidencies, 1808–1838*, P. Richardson, London, 1839, vol. II, pp. 16–17; David Omissi, 'Martial Races: Ethnicity and Security in Colonial India, 1858–1939', *War & Society*, vol. 9, no. 1, May 1991, p. 3; and Douglas Peers, 'The Habitual Nobility of Being: British Officers and the Social Construction of the Bengal Army in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1991, pp. 550–1.

26. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs: A Narrative of Seventeen Years Residence in India*, vol. 4, London, 1813, vol. 1, p. 382.

27. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 258–9; Rajputana reminded Forbes of Switzerland.

28. According to the testimony of one who gave evidence before an 1859 Parliamentary Committee on Indian affairs, 'the feeling was that [with respect to Brahmins, the recruiters]...felt they ha[d]...a more respectable man, in the same way as in our country you would rather have a farmer's son than a man taken from the street.' See Peers, 'The Habitual Nobility of Being', p. 551. Here again physique played a role: the yeoman farmer, doing hard manual labour all day, tended to be better built and stronger than the city dweller. In Anglo-Indian eyes, rural folk tended to be less educated, and thus more politically inert, than their urban cousins.

29. These percentages have been computed from data in: Mark H. Jacobsen, 'The Modernization of the Indian Army, 1925–1939', Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Irvine, 1979, p. 219; GoI, Army Department, Recruiting in India before and during the War of 1914–18, p. 7, in BL(OIOC): V/10/12.

30. For the north-western threat to British-India's security in the later nineteenth century, see Malcolm Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1987.

31. See Biddiss, 'Progress, Prosperity and Positivism', passim.

32. See M. D. Biddiss, *The Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau*, Weybright and Talley, New York, 1970; J. C. Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, S. Richardson, London, 1813; and Charles Brace, *Races of*

the Old World, Scribner's, New York, 1863; see also R. Horsman, 'Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 37, 1976.

33. Bayly, 'Caste and 'Race', p. 173.

34. Ibid., p. 169.

35. The enumerative modality is part of a framework of six interpretive modalities that Cohn has devised to analyse British India. Besides the enumerative modality, Cohn postulates the existence of five other modalities: the historiographic modality which 'involved the ideological construction of the nature of Indian Civilizations'; the observational/travel modality, where Englishmens' and Englishwomens' accounts of their travels in India were 'mediated by socio-political contexts, as well as [by] historically specific aesthetic principles'; the survey modality covered 'a wide range of practices, from the mapping of India to collecting botanical specimens, to the recording of architectural and archaeological sites...or the most minute measuring of a peasant's fields...[the analysis of which reveals]...the process by which these vast amounts of knowledge were transformed into textual forms...that were deployed by the colonial state in fixing, bounding, and settling India.'; the museological modality, by which India—'for many Europeans, a vast museum...its people representing past ages',—was defined artistically; and the surveillance modality, by which Anglo-India kept close watch on those Indians who did not play by the rules of the 'British-constructed theatre of power...[such as]...sunnyasis, fakirs, dacoits...thugs, pastoralists...and entertainers'. See Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, pp. 5–11.

36. These 'races' were: Punjabi Muslims, Pathans, Sikhs, Jats, Dogras, Brahuis, Garhwalis, Kumaonis, Gurkhas, Rajputs, Marathas, Deccani Muslims, Hindustani Muslims, Madrassi Christians, Madrassi Muslims, and lower caste Madrassi Hindus.

37. Pitt D. Bonarjee, *A Handbook of the Fighting Races of India*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1899, pp. ix, 77.

38. Ibid., p. 81.

39. The term 'babu', in its original Bengali usage, was a term of respect, akin to 'esquire' in English usage. However, in Anglo-Indian usage, babu came to have a derisive connotation, describing an Indian who, having learnt English and procured employment either with the government or in one of the new middle-class professions, now had the 'temerity' to claim similarity with an Anglo-Indian society that was bent on maintaining barriers between itself and anything but the higher 'aristocratic' rungs of Indian society. See Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate*

Bengali' in the late Nineteenth Century, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, pp. 17–18; and C. Baxter, 'The Genesis of the Babu: Bhabanicharan Banerji and the Kalikata Kamalalay', in P. G. Robb and D. Taylor (eds), *Rule, Protest and Identity: Aspects of Modern South Asia*, Curzon Press, London, 1978, pp. 193–206. The latter work posits that the pejorative use of babu was in fact coined by early nineteenth-century Bengali social satirists who used the term to lampoon the cultural habits of the Bengali nouveau riche.

40. Baxter, 'The Genesis of the Babu', p. 198.

41. For a basic introduction, see J. Masselos, *Indian Nationalism: An History*, 3rd revised (ed.), Sterling, Bombay, 1993, chs 1–5; and S. R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, Vikas, Delhi, 1971. In recent years, the nature of Indian nationalism has become a 'contest space'. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* Zed Books, London, 1986; and, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.

42. The IPWD was established in 1854 to undertake and supervise the construction of communication and irrigation networks in Company territory. Though part of the civil administration, it had strong links with the military, having originated as the Engineering Branch of the Company's Military Board in 1786. Consequently, a sizeable number of the presidency armies' British officers were seconded to it. This practice continued under the Crown. See A. Butterworth, 'District Administration in Madras, 1818–58', in H. H. Dodwell and R. R. Sethi (eds), *The Cambridge History of India, vol. VI: The Indian Empire, 1858–1919, and The Last Phase, 1919–1947*, Calcutta, 1958; original edition, without Sethi's postscript: Cambridge, 1933, p. 51; Tara Chand, *A Short History of The Indian People*, 5th edn, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 319–20.

43. For information on the Indian engineering colleges, see A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 119–22; and B. B. Mishra, *The Indian Middle Classes: their Growth in Modern Times*, OUP, London, 1961, pp. 184–5, 289.

44. This institution was charged with the task of training Englishmen for the higher professional grades of the IPWD. See Sir H. Verney Lovett, 'The Development of the Services, 1858–1918', in Dodwell and Sethi, *The Cambridge History of India: vol. VI*, pp. 363; 374.

45. Minute: Lieutenant General Sir George Chesney to General Sir Donald Stewart, 22 Jan. 1885 [hereafter referred to as: Chesney's Minute, 22 Jan. 1885], para. 1, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019.

46. Chesney, *Indian Polity,* pp. 268–9.

47. This idea manifested itself in the writings of Henry Maine and Alfred Lyall, two of the most notable Anglo-Indian scholar officials. See Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 68–92.

48. Chesney, *Indian Polity*, pp. 268–9.

49. On the Scots, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, Pimlico, London, 1992, passim; and H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. R. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986. On the 'pacification' of India, see M. H. Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757–1857*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.

50. Chesney's Minute, 22 Jan. 1885, paras 2–4, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019.

51. Each of these institutions was located so that it could cater to the educational requirements of the Indian princely and noble houses in a particular region of India. The Rajkumar College was opened in Rajkot in 1871, and was initially meant to serve the Kathiawar states, but this was later widened to cover the entire Bombay presidency. Mayo College, at Ajmer, was established in 1875, to serve the needs of the Rajput states. Daly College, Indore, opened at Indore in 1876 to cover the states of the Central India Agency, and Aitchison College, Lahore, was founded in 1888 to meet the need of the Punjab princes. See Report on Chiefs' Colleges, 1902, paras 10–16, BL(OIOC): L/P&S/10/5; H. Sharp, *Progress of Education in India, 1912–17: Seventh Quinquennial Review*, Government Superintendent Printing, Calcutta, 1918, vol. 1, para. 441.

52. According to Lord Curzon, who championed their cause at a later date, if the Indian princes, aristocrats, and 'men of good family' were to take their rightful place as a ruling class under British paramountcy, they would have to 'learn the English language, and become...familiar with English customs, Literature, science, modes of thought, [and] standards of truth and honour'. See Lord Curzon's speech opening a conference on the Chiefs' Colleges, Calcutta, 15 Jan. 1902, in T. R. Raleigh (ed.), *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection of his Speeches as Viceroy and Governor General of India, 1898–1905*, Macmillan, London, 1906, pp. 245, 249.

53. Some fascinating research has been done on the connection between the public schools, militarism, and the British Army in the Victorian era. See, especially, Geoffrey Best, 'Militarism and the Victorian Public School', in B. Symon and I, Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational*

Institution, Dublin, 1975; and Ian Worthington, 'Antecedent Education and Officer Recruitment: An Analysis of the Public School–Army Nexus, 1849–1908', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster, 1984.

54. On the Chief's colleges specifically, see 'Eton in India', which is a chapter in J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects in the Diffusion of an Ideal*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1986).

55. Chesney's Minute, 22 Jan. 1885, paras 3–4, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019.

56. Ibid., para. 2, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019.

57. GoI, Army Department (hereafter GoI (AD)), Despatch 47 of 1885, 21 March 1885, paras 1, 5, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/133.

58. This was to be a recurring theme in the Indianization debate almost until Independence in 1947. It was intoned by such eminent Indian Army officers as Lord Roberts and General Sir Henry Rawlinson, and even made its way into the debates of the Indian Central Legislative Assembly in the 1920s.

59. In the irregular pattern the officer establishment consisted of a Commandant, a second-in-command, and an adjutant. In the special regiments, the Commandant was initially to hold the rank of Major, the second-in-command a Captaincy, and the adjutant a Lieutenancy. After serving six years with the special regiments, Commandants were to attain Lieutenant Colonelcies, and their second-in-command Captaincies. The promotion of officers of the special regiments more junior than this was to be determined on the basis of their age at joining. See GoI (AD): Despatch 47 of 1885, 21 March 1885, paras 5, 9–10, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/133.

60. The system of direct commissions into the VCO cadre was one of the recommendations of the 1879 Army Reorganisation Commission. Essentially, it sought to attract to a better class of 'native'—in terms of status and education—to the VCO ranks, so as to improve the general efficiency of the cadre.

61. GoI (AD) Despatch No. 47 of 1885, 21 March 1885, paras 9–10, 5, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/133.

62. For the importance of 'character' in Anglo-Indian military thinking of the time, see Brigadier General Sir Walter Braithwaite, 'For the Conduct of an Army, Character Weighs More than Knowledge or Science', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, vol. 42, !913. Braithwaite's essay was based on a lecture he gave at Simla in July 1913. One must note, however, that not all the character in the world was enough to protect the British and Indian Expeditionary

Forces from science—as embodied by the artillery and machine guns that they encountered in France in 1914.

63. GoI (AD) Despatch No. 47 of 1885, 21 March 1885, para. 7, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/133.

64. Ibid.

65. John Wodehouse, 1st Earl Kimberley (1826–1902) was a career politician who occupied ministerial positions at Westminster from the 1850s to the 1880s. During this time, he was, among other things, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1864–6), Colonial Secretary (1870–4; 1880–2), and India Secretary (1882–5). A Whig, he was therefore from the more conservative wing of the Gladstonian Liberal Party. See Michael Bentley, *Politics without Democracy 1815–1914: Perception and Preoccupation in British Government*, Fontana, London, 1984, p. 381. For Kimberley's Indian career, see R. J. Moore, *Liberalism and Indian Politics, 1872–1922*, Edward Arnold, London, 1966, passim, and Briton Martin Jr, *New India, 1885: British Official Policy and the Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969.

66. Between them, these officers had fifteen years' experience as Commander-in-Chief India. Stewart, whose support of the special regiment scheme was instrumental in its despatch to London, had returned to England to take a seat on the India Secretary's Council.

67. This was caused by the crisis over Home Rule for Ireland.

68. Kimberley to Dufferin, 15 May 1885, Dufferin Papers, BL(OIOC): MSS.Eur.F.130/3.

69. Secretary of State for India (SSI) Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, para. 6, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/2121.

70. Note by Sir Ashley Eden, 8 Feb. 1886, para. 4, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

71. SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, para. 6, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/2121; Secret Memorandum by Field Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala (hereafter: Napier's Secret Memo), 11 May 1885, para. 7, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

72. SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, para. 6, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/2121; Lieutenant General Sir Charles Brownlow, Appointment of Natives to Commands of Regiments in India, 24 May 1885, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1719. Arabi's rebellion was essentially a coup d'etat against the Egyptian Khedive. The extreme British

reaction was due to the fact that Arabi's nationalist regime threatened British interests in Egypt, and especially, their control of the Suez canal, a vital imperial lifeline.

73. Secret Memorandum by Sir Charles Reid, 19 May 1885, in Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

74. Secret Memorandum by General Sir Donald Martin Stewart, 21 January 1886, (hereafter Stewart's Memo), para. 6, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88, 15 April 1886, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

75. Memorandum by Sir Ashley Eden on the GoI Despatch No. 47, dated 21 March 1885 (on Native Officers) (hereafter Eden's Memo), 6 July 1885, para. 7, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1723.

76. Ibid.

77. Secret Memorandum by General Frederick Haines, 18 May 1885, para. 2, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

78. Napier's Secret Memo, 11 May 1885, para. 7, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

79. The Ilbert Bill of 1883 allowed Indian justices to try Britons in *mofussil* (up-country) areas in criminal cases. It provoked furious opposition on the part of Anglo-Indians, who insisted, on their right to be tried before British judges in the High Courts, located in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. Such was the vehemence of their protest that Viceroy Ripon was forced to water down the Bill. Like the military Indianization debate, the controversy over the Ilbert Bill foregrounded certain aspects of Anglo-Indian ideology, such as the inequality of Indians and Britons in terms of character and ability, and the hypocrisy of the Queen's Proclamation of 1858. The controversy also gave a fillip to the first wave of Indian nationalism. See Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 203–9; Burton Stein, *A History of India*, Blackwell, London, 1998, pp. 272–3; Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 20–1.

80. Memorandum by General Sir Peter S. Lumsden (hereafter Lumsden's Memo), 20 July 1885, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, in BL(OIOC):L/MIL/3/950.

81. Stewart's Memo, 21 Jan. 1886, para. 6, in Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, in ibid.

82. Kimberley to Dufferin, 15 May 1885, Dufferin Papers, BL(OIOC): MSS.Eur.F.130/3.

83. The Great Game got under way when Russian expansion eastward from the Urals began to be seen as a threat to the northern fringes of Anglo-India. By the early 1880s, Afghanistan was becoming a disputed area in this conflict. In 1884, Russia occupied Merv, provoking heightened Anglo-Indian fears of Russian designs on Afghanistan and the Indian frontier as a whole. It was to defuse this tense situation that the Afghan boundary commission was set up. See Edward Ingram, *Commitment to Empire: Prophesies of the Great Game in Asia, 1797–1800*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981; D. P. Singhal, *India and Afghanistan, 1876–1907*, Delhi, 1962; and Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India.' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4.

84. Kimberley to Dufferin, 15 May 1885, Dufferin Papers, BL(OIOC): MSS. Eur. F. 130/3; Secret Memorandum by General Sir R. Meade, 23 May 1885, para. 2; and Secret Memorandum by General Sir R. Bright, 19 May 1885, para. 3, Enclosure to SSI Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/950.

85. Note by Sir Ashley Eden, 8 Feb. 1886, para. 6, Enclosures to SSI Military Despatch No. 88 of 1886, 15 April 1886.

86. The Guides was a corps of irregular cavalry founded by Henry Lawrence in 1846 to procure intelligence and act as guides to regular forces in the newly conquered areas of the Punjab and the frontier beyond. Its first commander was Lieutenant Henry Lumsden, who was, for a time, its only British officer. The Corps, which was later integrated into the Punjab Field Force, saw action in the second Anglo-Sikh war of 1849, the Siege of Delhi in 1857, the Cavagnari incident of 1879, and numerous frontier actions. See Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers, and Men*, Macmillan, London, 1974, pp. 328–9.

87. GoI (AD) Despatch No. 57 of 1917, 3 Aug. 1917, para. 12, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019. A reserve system for the Indian Army was instituted in 1886–7, in response to the Russian war scare. Under the terms of this system, there were two classes of reserve—an active and a garrison reserve. In keeping with the traditions of the Indian Army, service was to be voluntary, and men with between five and twelve years' colour service were eligible for the active reserve; the garrison reserve was open to men who had retired after twenty-one years' service (either all with the colours or colour and active reserve service combined). The active reserve was to be called up for a month's training every year, and the garrison reserve for the same period once every two years. This system was in effect until 1923. See GoI, *Army in India*, pp. 22–3.

88. Some measure of Roberts' attitudes towards India, the Indian Army, and the Empire can be gained by looking at his memoirs, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief*, 2 vols, Bentley, London, 1897. There is no satisfactory modern biography of Roberts, the only extant work being W. H. Hannah's popular work, *'Bobs', Kipling's General: The Life of Field Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar*, London, 1972.

89. Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers, and Men*, London, 1974, p. 34; Roberts, *Forty One Years in India*, vol. II, pp. 91–2.

90. Bernard Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition,* p. 187; O. T. Burne, 'The Empress of India', *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. 3, 1887, p. 22.

91. On Roberts' role in the Second Afghan War, see Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj*, London, 1989, pp. 200–17, passim.

92. General Sir Frederick Roberts, Memorandum on a Proposal of the GoI to Appoint Native Gentlemen to the Commissioned Ranks of the Indian Army in the same Ranks as European Officers, 29 July 1886 (hereafter Roberts' Memo, 29 July 1886), para. 1; Roberts to General Donald Stewart, 6 Aug. 1886, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1615: Confidential Correspondence of General Sir Frederick Roberts (hereafter: Roberts' Correspondence), pts VI(1); VII.

93. Roberts to Sir Alfred Lyall, 24 Sept. 1884, Roberts Correspondence, pt. III.

94. Roberts' Memo, 29 July 1886, para. 6, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VI(1).

95. Ibid., para. 2.

96. Ibid., paras 7–8.

97. Ibid., paras 9, 7.

98. Ibid., para. 7.

99. Ibid., paras 10–11.

100. He mentioned four of these VCOs by name: Ressaidar Mohammed Afzal Khan (11th Bengal Lancers); Subedar-Major Mouladad (20th Punjab Infantry); Subedar-Major Natha Singh (23rd Pioneers); and Ressaldar-Major Hassan Ali Khan (13th Bengal Lancers).

101. Roberts' Memo, 29 July 1886, para. 14, in Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VI(i).

102. Ibid., para. 15.

103. Sundaram, 'A Grudging Concession', pp. 81–5. See also *Navavishakar*, 16 May 1885; *Surabhi*, 16 June 1885; *Sadharani*, 21 June 1885, BL(OIOC): L/R/5/11; *Swadesamitran*, 7 July 1885, BL(OIOC): L/R/5/105.

104. Some measure of the legal profession's dominance in the early phase of the Congress can be gained from the fact that 11 of the 16 Indians who served as Congress presidents in the period 1885–1909 were successful lawyers.

105. J. R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977, p. 89.

106. Ibid., pp. 53–63; Bipan Chandra, et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1989, p. 72; A. M. Zaidi and S. Zaidi (eds), *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, S. Chand, New Delhi, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 49, 226.

107. Roberts thought that the former honour should go to men like Ressaidar-Major Muhammad Aslam Khan, of the 5th Bengal Cavalry, who was then officer commanding the Khyber Levies. As for the latter honour, he did not have any specific candidate in mind. See Roberts to Dufferin, 30 March 1887; General Sir Frederick Roberts, Memorandum on the Question of the Employment and Rank of Native Officers, 11 May 1887, (hereafter Roberts' Memo, 11 May 1887) paras 2–3, Roberts Correspondence, pt. IV.

108. GoI Military Despatch No. 139 of 1887, 12 Aug. 1887, paras 1–4, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/138.

109. Richard Assheton Cross, 1st Vicount, (1823–1914) Conservative politician; elected to Parliament, 1857; Home Secretary in Disraeli's administration, 1874–80; Salisbury's India Secretary, 1886–92; Lord Privy Seal, 1895–1900.

110. SSI Military Despatch No. 314 of 1887, 30 Nov. 1887, paras 2–4, in BL(OIOC): L/MIL/3/2122.

111. Ibid., paras 5–6.

112. Ibid., paras 7–8.

113. *The London Gazette*, 14 Jan. 1888, p. 2.

114. Sir George Chesney, Military Education for the Natives of India, 23 Jan. 1888, (hereafter Chesney's Minute, 23 Jan. 1888) para. 6, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/2202.

115. The final form of this resolution only emerged after considerable debate amongst the delegates of the 1887 Congress. As initially proposed by Narendranath Sen, editor of the influential English language daily *The Indian Mirror*, it closely mirrored Anglo-Indian

sentiment in advocating military education and officer commissions only for Indian princes and gentlemen. Perhaps Sen believed that his resolution would receive a fair hearing from the white sahibs, if it seemed to be in line with their own thinking. In any case, Sen aroused the ire of fellow Congressmen like Dwarkanath Ganguli, who contended that the exclusive nature of the resolution went against the stated purpose of Congress to represent all India, and all its people. Zaidi and Zaidi, *Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 1, pp. 193–5, 226; For a detailed analysis, see Sundaram, 'A Grudging Concession', pp. 126–8.

116. *The Indian Mirror* carried numerous editorials urging Higher commissions for Indians. See, for example, its issues of 27 and 28 March 1885.

117. Chesney's Minute, 23 Jan. 1888, para. 7, BL(OIOC): L/MIL17/5/2202.

118. A system of 'direct commissions' to the lowest ranks of the VCO grade had been recommended by the Eden Commission, and was duly adopted in 1880. This was done in order to attract to the Indian military the more intelligent younger members of the martial races, who might otherwise have entered more lucrative civil professions. See V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army 1600–1974*, Allied, Bombay, 1974, p. 122.

119. To support this contention, Chesney cited the civil analogy: if Indians could not be appointed to the High Court Bench, district judgeships, or gain appointment to the covenanted ICS unless they possessed an English education, the same should also be required of Indians desiring the Queen's Commission. See Chesney's Minute, 23 Jan. 1888, para. 14, BL(OIOC):L/MIL/17/5/2202.

120. Ibid., paras 22–3; Imperial Service contingents were one of the tangible manifestations of official India's collaboration with princely India. They were conceived in the late 1880s as a means by which Indian princes could show their support to the Crown by providing troops for imperial service—possibly outside India—to augment the Indian Army, in time of need. By 1912, these contingents numbered 20,000. Far from being merely titular, some of the contingents did actually serve overseas. Hyderabad sent contingents to Burma in 1888–90, and to South Africa in 1902–4, and Alwar, Bikaner and Jodhpur sent troops to China in 1900–1 to help put down the Boxer rising. See F. G. Cardew, 'The India Imperial Service Troops', *Blackwood's Magazine*, no. 160, July 1896; E. S. Haynes, 'The Political Role of the Armed Forces of the Indian States after World War I', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1990; and Sundaram, 'A Grudging Concession', pp. 58–9.

121. Chesney's Minute, 23 Jan. 1888, paras 24–6, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/2202.

122. Ibid., para. 17.

123. Since the 500-odd states constituting princely India were technically foreign to British India, relations with them were the responsibility of the Government of India's Foreign Department.

124. Chesney's Minute, 23 Jan. 1888, paras 21–2, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/2202.

125. Ibid., paras 28–9.

126. Ibid., paras 28–31. The Roorkee school was set up in response to a recommendation of the Eden Commission, which had urged that 'native officers ought to be encouraged to take upon themselves the full responsibility of their troops and companies in the field, in cantonment, or in detachment...[because]...the greater the responsibility and power committed to them, the more efficiently they seem to perform their trust'. See Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, pp. 121–2.

127. Chesney's Minute, 23 Jan. 1888, para. 32, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/2202.

128. Ibid., paras 2; 34.

129. This absence was occasioned by Roberts' tour of all the important garrisons of the Bengal Army. See Roberts to Sir Alfred Lyall, 22 June 1888, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VIII; Roberts, *Forty One Years in India*, vol. 2, p. 521.

130. Roberts to H. R. H. the Duke of Cambridge, 13 May 1888; Roberts to Brownlow, 14 May 1888; and Roberts to Lyall, 22 Jun. 1888, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VIII.

131. General Sir Frederick Roberts, Memorandum on Military Education for the Natives of India, 18 May 1888 (hereafter Roberts' Memo, 18 May 1888), para. 4, Roberts Correspondence, pt. VI(1).

132. Ibid., paras 10, 16.

133. Ibid., para. 13.

134. Ibid., para. 15.

135. Ibid., paras 14–15.

136. Roberts to R. Churchill, 26 May 1885, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. II.

137. Roberts' Memo, 18 May 1888, paras 18–20, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VI(1).

138. Ibid., paras 19–20.

139. Roberts to Lansdowne, 17 March 1890, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. V.

140. Roberts to Lyall, 22 June 1888, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VIII.

141. Ibid.

142. Roberts to Lansdowne, 17 March 1890, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. V.

143. General Sir Frederick Roberts, Memorandum on Military Education for Natives, 27 May 1890 (hereafter: Roberts' Memo, 27 May 1890), para. 3, in Roberts Correspondence, pt. VI(2); GoI Military Proceedings 1890: 3187–90A, p. 20; GoI(AD) Despatch No. 57 of 1917, 3 Aug. 1917, para. 16, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/7/19019.

144. Roberts' Memo, 27 May 1890, para. 4, Roberts Correspondence, pt. VI(2).

145. Ibid., para. 5.

146. Ibid., para. 10.

147. Ibid., para. 6.

148. General Sir Frederick Roberts, Military Education for Natives, 16 July 1890, in Roberts Correspondence, pt. VI.

149. Ibid.

150. Lansdowne to Roberts, 17 July 1890, in Roberts' Papers, 7101-23-34: Letters from Lord Lansdowne, National Army Museum.

151. General Sir Frederick Roberts, The Inexpediency of Substituting Native for British Officers in the Indian Army, 6 Oct. 1890 (hereafter Roberts' Memo, 6 Oct. 1890), paras 2, 9, Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VI.

152. On European 'Mercenary Captains' in India, see Herbert Compton, *A Particular Account of European Military Adventurers in Hindustan*, T. Allen Unwin, London, 1893; and Shelford Bidwell, *Swords for Hire: European Mercenaries in Eighteenth Century India*, London, 1971.

153. Roberts' Memo, 6 Oct. 1890, paras 7–8, in Roberts' Correspondence, pt. VI.

154. *Forty One Years in India*, p. 531; Roberts to Lansdowne, 11 Nov. 1892, Roberts Papers 7101–23–33: Letters to Lord Lansdowne, National Army Museum.

155. The history of this institution, which was disbanded in 1914, is to be found in Chandar S. Sundaram 'Martial' Indian Aristocrats and the Military System of the Raj: The Imperial Cadet

Corps, 1900–14', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 25, no. 3, Sept. 1997, pp. 415–39. See also Sundaram, 'Preventing "Idleness": the Maharaja of Cooch Behar's Proposal for Officer Commissions in the British Army for the Sons of Indian Princes and Gentlemen, 1897–8', *South Asia*, n.s., vol. 18, no. 1, June 1995, pp. 115–30.

156. Note by Political Department, India Office, 14 July 1910, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1750.

157. Viceroy (AD) to India Office, 8 March 1917 (telegram 3452), para. 2, BL(OIOC): L/MIL7/19006.

158. By 1912, a number of Indian gentlemen commissioned in the NILF, such as Lieutenants Aga Casim Shah, Amar Singh, Bala Saheb Daflé, and Malik Mumtaz Muhammed Khan were growing increasingly dissatisfied with their extra-regimental postings. See General Sir Edmund Barrow, General Officer Commanding, Southern Army, to Brigadier W. E. Peyton, Military Secretary to C-in-C India, 9 March 1912; Brigadier W. E. Peyton to Lt. Col. F. A. Maxwell, Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy, 2 May 1912, Hardinge Collection 85/1/7a, Cambridge University Library.

159. Note by Lieutenant-General Sir Beauchamp Duff, 8 July 1910, BL(OIOC): L/MIL/17/5/1750.

160. Sir Reginald Craddock, Minute on India after the War, 4 March 1915, Hardinge Collection 89, Cambridge University Library.

161. See Sundaram, 'A Grudging Concession', pp. 270–3.

4

Logistics and the Construction of Loyalty: The Welfare Mechanism in the Indian Army 1859–1913

Kaushik Roy

British military domination of the subcontinent was possible because Indians joined the colonial army and remained loyal to it.[1] The British innovated a new type of bureaucratic structure for the colonial military. Another British innovation was the welfare package for soldiers.[2] This package created bonds of loyalty between the troops and the army's high command. An impersonal loyalty structure thus replaced the personal loyalty of soldiers to their clan and tribal chiefs, which was present in pre-British armies.[3] The crux of the sepoy army was a series of incentives, with which the imperialists purchased the soldiers' loyalty. This policy enabled the colonial army to attract and retain Indian manpower, and to prevent any large-scale military rebellion after 1857.

The British conquest of India was viable because of the low military effectiveness of the Indian potentates' forces. In Mughal India, *jagirdars* were responsible for raising military contingents in return for the assignment of land revenue by the monarch. Since the jagirdars maintained troops that were mostly from

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya and I. Kamtekar for their help.

their own clan, the soldiers were loyal to them. The *jagirs* were more or less hereditary. When the jagirdars died, their sons served in the military force and enjoyed the revenue assignments, even if they were incompetent. This hereditary principle implied an absence of professionalism. Due to the absence of a regular bureaucracy, the welfare schemes for soldiers remained ad hoc and the jagirdars lined their own pockets. The lack of cohesiveness of these forces was due to the chaotic distribution of rewards in such armies. Pay and pension remained in arrears. Medical facilities and the commissariats were non-existent. Promotions were based on nepotism. To improve their armies, Mahadji Sindia and Ranjit Singh tried to Europeanize their armies by bureaucratizing the distribution of incentives to soldiers. They tried to eliminate the jagirdars and bring the armies under their direct administration so that the soldiers would be loyal to the state. But their reforms were too few and too late.[4]

For constructing the Indian Army, the British depended on the professional military forces of Europe, and on indigenous military traditions. One of the chief instruments, which enabled the British to craft a new type of army, was the systematic supply of a series of incentives to the soldiers. The British in India imitated in this western standing armies. The professional armies, which emerged in the West from 1700 onwards, had regular wages, graduated wage scales, uniforms, and a hierarchy of ranks. The state took over from the private contractors the responsibilities of feeding, clothing, and equipping military personnel. This introduced the concept of a contract between the impersonal armed forces establishment and soldiers, which replaced the feudal concept of hereditary service among landlords and retainers. As the troops shifted their loyalty from the intermediary lords to the polity as a whole, the armies from quasi-private enterprises became public institutions.[5] A similar transformation occurred in the armed forces of India. However, the colonial context required modifications of the incentives available to the troops. As the British could not utilize the Indian soldier's national sentiment, supplying him with the right incentives, at the right time and right place and in adequate quantities, assumed great importance. So the colonial army provided various types of rewards to soldiers. The bureaucratic supply mechanism, which was geared towards the troops'

welfare, is referred to in this chapter as the 'welfare mechanism'. By caring for its personnel, the army integrated the troops and prevented desertions, mutinies, and treacheries[6] that had been endemic in the pre-colonial militias.

The term logistics is used here to mean incentives supplied for the Indian soldiers' comfort. The interdependence of logistics and loyalty is yet to be analysed thoroughly in the context of either international or Indian military history. J. A. Lynn has written that when the soldiers had no sympathy with the cause for which they fought, it was necessary to buy their obedience with pay and food. His observation is all the more applicable to the colonial army, as the sepoys were volunteers with no attachment to the imperial cause. C. Jones has shown that Bourbon France was able to attract volunteers and boost their morale in combat by providing health care, accommodation, etc. The British in India followed a similar policy. L. M. Crowell summarizes the administrative structure of the Madras Army's logistics but fails to link it to soldier loyalty. Tan Tai Yong examines the welfare measures introduced in Punjab after World War I to prevent disturbances among the ex-soldiers and to strengthen the loyalty of serving troops.[7]

This chapter analyses the imperial attempt to acquire the soldiers' loyalty through logistics before 1914. Section I shows the varied types of tangible goods and intangible incentives supplied to soldiers. Section II portrays the relationship between logistics and discipline. Section III points out the linkages between the military and financial interests of the Raj and the welfare bureaucracy.

I

Benefits for the Soldiers

The imperial aim was to raise the combat efficiency of the army by inculcating bravery and loyalty among the rank and file. The British assumption was that valour and faithfulness could be awakened and sustained by distributing rewards among troops. The incentive scheme evolved from late eighteenth century onwards and underwent modifications and expansion in the

aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny. Greater rewards were reaped by the units destined for battle zones and overseas services, as those activities involved greater mental stress and strain, long separation from families, and physical hardships.

Tangible benefits can be classified into monetary and non-monetary incentives. The most important monetary benefits were wages. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the Indian Army paid the soldiers regularly in cash because the British assumed that continuity and regularity gave troops a sense of loyalty and security and tied them to the army. Paying salaries punctually in cash was an important innovation introduced in the subcontinent by the British. Even in the nineteenth century, Nepal paid its troops by granting land. Arrears of pay, running into many months, were common in the Khalsa Army, and caused successive mutinies. Colonial soldiers were allocated extra money in order to encourage overseas service. Those Irregular Cavalry units that went to Aden after 1859 had their pay increased by one-third.[8]

Were the wages adequate? One school of opinion, which includes Clive Dewey and David Omissi, argues that the soldiers' pay was so high that they were able to save a lot from their wages: these savings were sent home, and reinvigorated the rural economy. R. G. Fox argues that small peasants sent their younger sons to the army to supplement their family incomes.[9] But the other school, represented by Amiya Barat, points out that the soldiers' pay was inadequate even for the basic amenities of life in the pre-1857 period.[10] And after the 1857 Mutiny, the privates' income did not increase.

Privates were paid Rs 7 per month till 1911, when the salary was increased to Rs 13. Although even a labourer was paid Rs 9 per month at Pegu in 1860, his job was irregular, unlike the job of the sepoy. The salary of privates was actually just adequate for basic necessities. In 1861, the government had to spend to Rs 9 per month for each soldier's ration. The commissariat did not supply the soldiers except in abnormal times. If we assume that privates took a less varied diet than that provided by the commissariat, then too their salaries, after deductions for clothing, etc., were just enough for subsistence. However, Indian officers' salaries were large enough to allow savings, which in turn might have monetized the rural economy.

A *subedar* major (the highest rank for an Indian in the infantry) was paid Rs 92 per month. The monthly salary of a *risaldar*, the highest post that could be attained by an Indian in the cavalry, was Rs 150.[11]

Whatever salary the British provided has to be judged within the prevailing context. The Indian agrarian economy was unable to absorb all the rural labourers. Hence from 1450 onwards, a significant section of the agrarian populace began to join the indigenous armies in order to tide over economic distress.[12] After 1859, the Raj monopolized the military labour market. As most of the princely armies had been demobilized, no other alternative employers were left for the marginal agrarian population.[13]

Nevertheless, after 1859 British officers were apprehensive that soldiers' wages were inadequate. They argued that pay should be increased because civilian wages and price levels were rising. Moreover, they were worried that if pay was not raised, then the 'martial' groups would prefer the police over the army.[14]

To tide over the price fluctuations of foodgrains, the army paid extra money, known as *batta*, to soldiers. In the first half of the nineteenth century, batta was paid to soldiers for service in 'foreign' areas like the Punjab and Sind. But when the Company annexed these two regions, batta for the units deployed there was abolished, despite the high price of foodgrains in those regions. This angered the soldiers and was one of the factors in the upheaval in 1857.[15] Bartle Frere, the Commissioner of Sind, argued in 1859 that abolition of batta was a blunder as a private could live in the Ganga valley on Rs 7 per month but it was impossible for him to live in Sind even on Rs 10 per month. By contrast George Clerk, a civilian official, argued that batta should not be paid for service in north-west India, as the cost of foodgrains in that region had declined.[16] However Frere carried the day, probably because the British were nervous after the Great Mutiny. Hence after 1859 batta was paid for service inside as well as outside India.[17]

When soldiers who were not needed were discharged, the army sweetened the pill by offering them gratuities in order to prevent any possibility of a mutiny. The greater the length of service for the Raj, the bigger the reward offered. When the 13th Punjab Infantry's personnel were invalided at Meerut in 1861,

soldiers with twenty years of service received pension, as well as a gratuity which amounted to nine months' pay, and those with less then twenty years of service were awarded a pension plus a gratuity equivalent to six months' pay.[18]

There was no retirement age for soldiers in the pre-British Indian armies. Nor was there any provision for old age or disability pensions. In the 1760s, the French Army introduced pensions. The British introduced this European technique in the subcontinent. From 1796 onwards in the Indian Army, there were two types of pension—life and family pensions. For those personnel who were discharged due to physical infirmities, or who had taken voluntary retirement, or whose terms of service were over, the army keeping in view their past service paid money every month till their death. In the 1860s, privates with twenty years of service received pensions of Rs 3.5 per month, while those with forty years of service received Rs 7 per month.[19] To instil loyalty among the troops for combat against possible rebels, a scheme was designed to provide them with greater pension. For signal service against the mutineers of 1857, Mowla Buksh of the Irregular Cavalry, after serving only thirty-six years and two months, received the pension to which he would have been entitled only after forty years of service.[20] Soldiers who showed extraordinary bravery in campaigns also acquired higher pensions. Naib Risaldar H. M. Khan of the Poona Horse retired in 1861 after serving for forty-three years. He was eligible for a pension of Rs 20 per month. But due to his excellent performance in the assault on Asirgarh in 1818, he was granted an extraordinary pension of Rs 50 per month.[21]

In the pre-colonial Hindu armies, family pension was available only for officers. When they died, their relatives got land grants from the king. The British converted this welfare measure into cash, and extended it to privates as well. The imperial assumption was that the scheme of family pensions would attach to the service of colonialism, not only the soldiers, but also their families. If the heirs were women or old men, the pensions were paid till their death. If dead soldiers had no surviving parents then the pensions were paid to their sons till they became adults, or to their daughters till their marriages.[22] If soldiers died fighting gallantly, then an extraordinary lump sum, instead of a mere family pension, was granted. In 1860,

the mother of Risaldar Wachan Singh, got Rs 1000 after his death for his bravery.[23] This type of reward was designed to generate aggressiveness among soldiers during combat, as the troops were sure that even if they died fighting, the government would care for their loved ones.

The army hoped to activate the soldiers' combat potential through the wound pension, which was introduced in 1852. This sort of pension was given to personnel who lost their limbs in fighting or became so seriously wounded that they had to be discharged from the army. The size of this pension depended on the nature of wounds. Privates with minor injuries received Rs 4 per month while those with serious wounds received Rs 5 per month.[24]

For enhancing group solidarity, western professional armies provided uniforms to their employees. Uniforms for soldiers were a novelty in India. The Maratha Army had no uniforms. The British Indian Army supplied uniforms annually, free of cost, to soldiers who went abroad. In 1859, each of the 5000 soldiers who went to China got two pairs of greatcoats.[25]

The Rajputs used to take opium to reduce nervousness before combat. The British replaced opium with alcohol, because contemporary British medical opinion believed that alcohol cured many diseases. So, during epidemics, liquor flowed freely. Drink, writes John Keegan, was an important palliative for nervous tension while waiting for imminent action. Just before battle, it was a psychological necessity. Taking alcohol before battles was common in European armies: the British introduced this trend in India. When Indian soldiers faced extra strain, as during campaigns or overseas deployments, they were provided extra amounts of rum and malt liquor to keep morale intact. Each soldier was ordinarily supplied with one dram of rum per day, but during war and epidemics, it increased to two drams per day. Sick soldiers were allowed to buy rum at subsidized price from the army canteens.[26]

The army took care of the soldiers' health, because much of the war machine's strength depended on it. The British in India were obviously influenced by the European military establishment's assumption that supplying medical care for the sick raised morale and encouraged men to fight. In 1870, hospital facilities were available for 5 per cent of colonial soldiers.[27]

Some aspects of the Indian Army's reward structure were unique by European standards, because the British absorbed some indigenous traditions. Land grants to the soldiers, which the British retained for the Indian Army, had no place in western armies. This incentive was the continuation of the pre-colonial military tradition of issuing hereditary land grants (jagirs) to the soldiers. Most of the soldiers came from small peasant families and had a stake in the land.[28] The army encouraged them by dangling the prospect of jagirs in for exceptional performances like raising soldiers for the Raj and saving British officers. Aitah Mohammed Khan was a Risaldar in the Bunoo Police Cavalry. During 1857, he volunteered for service in Hindustan along with 112 of his tribesmen. They were in the Multan Horse and fought against the rebels in Delhi. After the rebellion, he and his followers was granted jagirs (each worth Rs 1000) in perpetuity.[29]

When it was not possible to provide cooked food to soldiers during emergencies, the army provided raw foodgrains at controlled prices in bazaars set up under military supervision, for the men to cook. Bazars were an indigenous tradition which the British absorbed. When local supplies were not forthcoming, such markets were set up and they had at least three days' supplies. The commanding officers maintained registers which contained the names of all the *banias* (Hindu businessmen) who were allowed to sell in the market. The banias had to pay a certain sum to the regiments for being allowed to do business. One bania supplied either a company or half a squadron of cavalry. Occasionally, the banias supplied on credit. No *mahajans* (moneylenders) were allowed in the bazaars, because the army feared that the soldiers might get into debt. Indian officers were appointed as *kotwals*, who saw to it that banias supplied proper quantities of cereals to soldiers.[30]

The history of warfare shows, however, that soldiers were not willing to die just for tangible incentives. They needed symbolic rewards too. Such tokens conferred honour and glory, and constituted the intangible factors that led men to war. The pre-colonial armies had at their disposal robes of honour and daggers which were awarded to exceptional warriors. The British replaced them with rewards like medals imported from the West. Charles I in 1643 first introduced medals for those men

who had performed well under difficult circumstances. Individual loyalty and gallantry were honoured by supplying Distinguished Service Medals to Indian soldiers for extraordinary performance.[31] For honouring regimental pride, the 2nd Gurkha Rifles, which participated in the successful Kabul–Kandahar march, was awarded bronze stars in February 1882.[32] Though such medals were of little intrinsic value they had value within the armed forces. John Keegan has rightly pointed out that the cultural ethos of military organizations is different from that of the civilian world.[33].

Orders and ranks were two awards which combined markers of status with the financial incentives. In 1837, Bentinck introduced the Indian Order of Merit, which was given for showing extraordinary bravery in combat. Those who bagged this award had their salaries and pensions increased.[34]

The British believed that ranks were a sort of carrot which encouraged the soldiers to risk their lives repeatedly, because a higher rank meant greater prestige along with financial perquisites. So the troops were promoted for gallantry in combat. In 1860, a private named Ranjit Singh, after being wounded in action, was promoted to a *Naik's* rank.[35]

II

Welfare Measures as Disciplinary Mechanism

Incentives were tools of domination as they were supplied to soldiers with the aim of encouraging good behaviour. When soldiers misbehaved, welfare measures were denied to them. The commanding officers had the discretionary power to give non-military jobs to soldiers, either during the troops' service tenures or after retirement. Such jobs were preferred by the troops because they involved less strenuous duties, and the troops continued to draw military salaries or pensions along with the wages of the new jobs. For such jobs, the soldiers required recommendations and good character certificates from their officers. This became a technique of extracting obedience from soldiers. One *Havildar* Munniapah of the 48th Madras Infantry Regiment, being in the good books of his commanding

officer, became Sub-Overseer in the Public Works Department (PWD) in Moulmein in 1861. On the other hand, if soldiers on deputation misbehaved, they were removed from the civil departments.[36]

Good conduct pay was introduced in 1837 to encourage long-term loyalty. The longer the soldiers remained loyal, the greater was their good conduct pay. After six years of service it became Re 1 per month and for ten years of service, it increased to Rs 2 per month. However, the commanding officers could deny this extra pay on grounds of misconduct. There was disagreement in the army over this scheme. Some officers wanted to link discipline with combat effectiveness rather than length of service. They argued that the higher pay should depend not merely on proper conduct and length of service but also on tactical efficiency of the troops.[37]

The breakdown of discipline in 1857 forced the army to strengthen the link between good behaviour and wages. A lobby which included John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of Punjab, Brigadier General Neville Chamberlain, and Lieutenant Colonel H. B. Edwardes of the Punjab Frontier Force (I term this group as the Punjab School) argued that ambition and satisfaction could be induced among soldiers by a graduated scale of pay for each rank. It was hoped that this would satisfy loyal veterans and would discourage rebelliousness among junior troops, as they were bound to gain economically by remaining loyal in the long run. This scheme was especially geared to encourage loyalty among the younger soldiers, as the life pension scheme had attractions only for the old soldiers who were going to retire, and most of the rebels of 1857 were newly enlisted recruits. The privates under this scheme got Rs 6 per month for the first year of service, Rs 7 per month from the second year of their service, and Rs 8 per month after fifteen years of service. Finally after twenty years of service, they derived Rs 8.8 per month. Graduated scales of pay existed for Indian officers also, based, however, not only on seniority but also on merit as assessed by British officers.[38] The power of assessing the capabilities of the Indian officers helped the British officers to control them.

A group within the army at the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century wanted to raise the life pension

of Indian officers and privates. They argued that Indian officers should not be alienated, their loyalty being especially important because of their high social position and the influence they enjoyed in their local communities. Colonel L. C. Dunsterville, Commandant of the 20th Punjab Regiment in 1912, warned that the low rate of privates' pensions was a source of discontent among the Sikhs. Major General F. J. Aylmer argued that the army introduced the life pension with the aim of extracting long-term good behaviour from soldiers. The underlying assumption was that the troops, would remain obedient and avoid misbehaviour that could result in their discharge in the hope of getting pensions after retirement. But as the pension had remained the same for the last hundred years, so it should be raised. Disagreeing with him, W. Meyer, a civilian official, argued, 'Do you think it is good to pamper mercenaries? The sepoys are pampered with all sorts of concessions.... The sepoy might gather that the government is afraid of him. In the civil departments, one has to serve for thirty years to get pension.' Conditions in the army were actually improving. Before 1857, soldiers received pension after forty years of service. In 1878, they received pensions after thirty-two years of service. And in 1912 they received them after twenty-five years of service. Against this Aylmer argued that the soldiers' job was more arduous than the civilians' and there was no option other than to keep the mercenaries contented.[39] However, before the pension could be raised, World War I broke out.

The breakdown of supplies has, frequently in history, resulted in the disintegration of military forces. Lack of food has resulted in a decline of morale, desertions, and the weakening of discipline culminating in pillage and plunder. In turn, this has provoked peasant violence against troops. A good example is the dissolution of the French Army in Spain against counter-insurgency warfare during 1808. In India, the Maratha Army did not accept the burden of feeding the soldiers directly. Contractors were assigned pieces of land. From the revenues of the land, they were supposed to supply the army. This system proved clumsy. The Marathas also depended on *banjaras* (grain merchants), who not only charged exorbitant prices but also vanished during campaigns and occasionally sold grains to the enemy forces. As a result, the Maratha field armies disintegrated

during protracted campaigns. The Maratha armies commandeered supplies, which in turn alienated peasants. To avoid such alienation Arthur Wellington paid for all his supplies during his campaign against Mysore and the Marathas. This turned the peasants pro-British and they not only brought all the provisions to the Company's forces but also supplied information about the enemy's movements. A contented peasantry made the British rear secure and an effective supply system possible. The Company's sepoys fought badly against the Sikhs at Ferozeshah in December 1845 because they were without provisions. But when the sepoys were well fed before Aliwal in January 1846, they fought admirably. The British learnt from this. To prevent losses among the men and animals in the army due to malnutrition, and to raise the fighting spirit of the troops, the military establishment was concerned with supplying food for the soldiers and forage for their horses. During famines, or when the army functioned as an Imperial Fire Brigade, local supplies either became too costly or were just not available. The commissariat then came to the soldiers' assistance. Rations were supplied when troops were deployed in China, as provisions could not be procured there.[40] If local food supplies were available but were costly, then the army paid its personnel extra. Each soldier, according to the army's calculations spent Rs 3.8 per month on his diet. But in 1860, when the prices of foodgrains increased, the authorities calculated that each soldier had to spend more than the stipulated amount. The army provided the extra money as dearness allowance, which could be spent on diet.[41] This kept the Indian soldiers well disciplined and hence tactically effective. During emergencies, when local food supplies collapsed, the more disciplined Indian regiments received preferential treatment from the commissariat in order to encourage obedience among other units. When, due to famine in Rajasthan, the units stationed there failed to acquire local supplies at the normal rate in 1861, the commissariat issued dearness allowances first to the Mharwara Battalion as it had remained loyal during 1857.[42]

Soldiers were generally provided some money, known as a hutting allowance, for constructing their lines when they were shifted from one place to another. But gradually the army constructed barracks (lines) for the soldiers.[43] The Home Army

in Britain, which started building barracks from the seventeenth century probably influenced the British in India. The argument in favour of barracks was that billeting the soldiers in the civilians' houses harmed group cohesion as the regiments had to be broken into small groups. It also became difficult for authorities to monitor the soldiers' behaviour. The European armies believed that the barrack was an essential military conditioning factor, as it separated soldiers from the civilian world. The Indian Army believed that if soldiers were lodged with civilians then the troops' discipline would collapse. If troops were exposed to the 'seditious' influence of civilians then their loyalty would undergo severe strain. So soldiers' lines were constructed and repaired at the state's expense.[44]

From its retired personnel, the army created a landed gentry to police the countryside. In the British conceptual framework, the landed gentry was respected in India. The imperial belief was that land grants immediately increased the prestige of ex-soldiers and, indirectly, the prestige of the army in rural society. The army provided land either to individual soldiers or by creating military colonies. Such measures also benefited the troops' families and encouraged them either to serve or remain loyal. Subedar Major Sangbir Thapa of the 2nd Gurkhas received a piece of land in 1868 for loyal service throughout his long tenure.[45] The army also set up colonies for old soldiers. The military colonies were a continuation of the invalid *thanahs*, which the Bengal Army established in the early nineteenth century. It was easier for the army to keep a watch over the retired soldiers concentrated in colonies than if they were scattered throughout the countryside. Their sons grew up in such colonies and were potential reservoirs of recruits. The government took 3000 acres of land from the *zamindars* in Dehradun for a military colony to settle the Gurkhas who had aided the British in reconquering Delhi from the rebels in 1857. The retired Gurkhas cultivated the land and paid the lowest possible tax.[46]

For retaining their orders and medals, soldiers had to behave well, as they were liable to lose these privileges for misconduct, or if they had to appear before the courts martial.[47] Besides gallantry, good behaviour on part of soldiers was also necessary for promotions. One Mohammed Afzul, a trooper of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, attacked the rebels in Kanauj on 23 October

1857. But due to his previous record of bad conduct, he was not promoted to the level of a non-commissioned officer. However, Ranjit Singh, a private who was wounded in action was promoted to the rank of Naik, as his previous service record was satisfactory.[48]

The British strategy was probably to co-opt Indian officers by offering them greater rewards. The officers' greater rewards kept them apart from privates and prevented a unity of interest developing among the Indians in the army. The imperial hope was that the privileged group—the officers—would value the extra rewards for themselves. So their selfish interest would dominate over the collective interest of the Indians in the army. Hence a struggle for power, prestige, and privilege would emerge among the Indians in the army and they would not operate as a monolithic body against the British officer corps.

Indian officers received more facilities than privates. In return, officers became responsible for the behaviour of their troops. The excuse that they had no knowledge about privates was not accepted any more after 1857. Indian officers became the confidential advisors of British commandants about the state of Indian privates, and aided the British officers in disciplining the troops.[49]

During 1857, the Bengal Army rebelled and the Punjab Irregular Cavalry aided in the suppression of the revolt. So the British increased the latter's pay after 1859. The British assumption was that the influence of Indian officers over privates was directly proportional to the officer's seniority. So the higher the rank, the greater was the quantum of increase in the pay packet. While risaldars' salaries were doubled, *dufadars*' and *kote dufadars*' increased only Rs 10 and Rs 7 respectively.[50] In the barracks there were special quarters for the Indian officers' comfort and privacy.[51] The higher the rank, the greater was the hutting allowance.[52] The Orders of British India were granted only to the Indian officers for long, honourable, and faithful service. Those who got these awards received the honorary titles of 'Sirdar Bahadur' and 'Bahadur' and after retirement received the honorary rank of Lieutenant or Captain. In addition, they received Rs 30–60 per month, along with their salaries or pensions. About 100 officers were given such awards each year.[53]

III

Welfare Measures, Military Effectiveness, and Financial Interests of the Army

Some welfare measures aided the military and financial interests of the army, while others harmed them. Non-military jobs awarded to soldiers were financially conducive for the state because this technique enabled the army to reward loyal and brave officers by giving higher posts in civilian administration, especially when promotion slots did not exist in the army. It was cheaper for the government to man the PWD with Indian officers. Indian officers were also more efficient as, unlike the European sergeants, they did not get drunk.[54]

The gratuity scheme raised the army's budget as it had to pay a large sum to the soldiers at one go. But at the same time, this measure raised the army's combat potential. Gratuities enabled the army to get rid of aged personnel who were militarily less effective compared to young robust personnel capable of arduous campaigning. Those soldiers who were unfit for soldiering, but had not yet reached the length of service necessary for getting pensions, were encouraged to take discharge by the offer of gratuities. For them, in 1870, the army introduced a policy under which soldiers willing to take discharge after five or ten years of service received gratuities amounting to salaries of three months and six months respectively.[55] This scheme was geared to create an army of young men, probably in response to the growing Russian threat on the north-west frontier.

Wound pensions for the Irregular Cavalry meant that the army had to replace the horses lost by the troopers in combat. This expenditure was aimed to raise the combat effectiveness of the irregular troopers. Such troopers were responsible for buying their own horses. When they lost their horses in action, all troopers made collective contributions, known as the *chunda* funds, to buy new horses. But when they were engaged in heavy fighting and lost many horses, the chunda funds were unable to replace all the horses. In the long run this encouraged a tendency among troopers to shy away from combat, in order to avoid casualties to their horses. To overcome this problem, the army intervened and paid monetary compensations to

encourage troopers to fight. When the 4th Sikh Cavalry lost many horses in action against the mutineers of 1857, the army paid each trooper Rs 150.[56] This measure was a vast improvement on the custom prevalent in the princely militaries in which troopers were responsible for their horses. If their mounts died, then the troopers were discharged. This faulty policy explains the reluctance of the cavalry of the indigenous powers to clash with the Raj's mounted force.[57]

The army spent money in making arrangements for supplying food to units deployed overseas. This was necessary because units stationed abroad suffered an extraordinary rate of sickness, due to the failure of soldiers to cook their own food properly. Soldiers generally cooked their food in earthen or stone ovens fired with twigs—a procedure that was both fatiguing and time consuming. The army's initial expenditure in making arrangements to feed the soldiers reduced the long-term financial loss which the army faced from pensions and gratuities to be paid to soldiers demobilized due to sickness. Moreover, the reduction of frontline strength reduced the overseas units' combat edge. So the army evolved a long administrative tail for providing food and water to soldiers who were deployed outside India. Each infantry regiment stationed abroad had ten coolies, twenty water carriers, ten sweepers, and one cook.[58]

Mark Harrison writes that health care for soldiers raised the army's social cohesion, which in turn raised its military efficiency. The British probably understood this. Betterment of living conditions resulted in much of the expenditure of the army. The army believed that this expenditure increased the combat potential of the force, by keeping soldiers healthy. The army was convinced that the ordinary populace was disease-prone. If any epidemic broke out among civilians who were considered vulnerable to diseases, then soldiers if lodged with them would catch the diseases too. So soldiers were segregated from civilians by being accommodated in lines.[59] The British believed that accumulated dirt gave rise to health problems. The only way to check this was by building new lines. On grounds of hygiene, any lines which were more than forty years old were demolished and new lines constructed. When diseases like small pox spread, the army demolished old lines and constructed new ones.[60]

There was direct linkage between sickness and frontline strength. The Marathas considered hospital arrangements unnecessary. Hence epidemics frequently decimated their forces. During the Second Afghan War (1878–80), the 1st Gurkha Rifles suffered more casualties from disease than from the enemy.[61] The effectiveness of the army depended not only how quickly it could suppress the spread of diseases but also on the speed with which it could restore the health of sick and wounded soldiers and transfer them to the battle zones. So money was no obstacle when it came to improving hospital facilities. The Indian Army provided *doolies* for carrying the sick. *Kuccha* hospitals were thatched, and hence vulnerable to fire, while moisture destroyed their walls. So hospitals were reconstructed with concrete.[62] Hospitals with low roofs were remade and under the new plans, some cavalry hospitals had tiled rooms.[63]

There were some welfare measures, however, which harmed combat potential and were financially expensive for the army. These measures were implemented because they aimed to create the picture of a benevolent *sarkar* among the soldiers, in order to strengthen their loyalty. The army gave pensions to the militarily useless troops, even though they were technically not eligible for such rewards. Those soldiers who became physically unfit for military duty after fourteen years of service were deliberately retained, even though they were useless from combat perspective, so that they became eligible for life pensions.[64]

Pre-British Indian militaries followed the notorious practice of going into campaigns with soldiers' families. This not only reduced such forces' mobility but also created enormous logistical problems. One of the reasons for the destruction of the Maratha Army in the Third Battle of Panipat was because it was followed by an enormous host of non-combatants. The British abolished this practice. The Indian Army sought to keep soldiers' spirits high by allowing them furlough (paid leave) to visit their villages. Furlough was introduced in 1796. This measure was necessary as most of the soldiers were married. Except in the Madras Army, where wives stayed with the regiments, only 15 per cent of the troops were allowed to bring their wives to cantonments. The rest of the soldiers' wives remained in villages. To further motivate the soldiers to perform

well in battle, those regiments which participated in operations and suffered combat losses were awarded extra furlough. For encouraging overseas service, those units which volunteered for duties abroad, were allowed a furlough of three and half months before and after the deployments. Soldiers were generally allowed three months of paid leave each year. If they contracted illness in the meantime, then on humanitarian grounds the furlough was extended by a period of two months, in order to project the army as benevolent.[65]

The army paid salaries to soldiers even when they were on leave. This welfare measure compromised the army's fighting potential. Due to furlough, the corps were 15 per cent weaker. Units stationed in strategically vulnerable areas like the north-west frontier, where living conditions were exceptionally harsh, got extra furlough. So such units were always 34 per cent below strength. As the war clouds gathered at the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, one lobby in the army was against allowing so much leave, as furlough reduced frontline strength. But Major General Birdwood cautioned,

> The leave rules of the sepoys are not too liberal. If it is reduced it will cause discontent.... The men are agriculturists and stoppage of leave means loss and trouble at home. With the limited establishment of families allowed for in the lines it is a physical necessity for the men to go for furlough. In the different recruiting areas the fact of a regiment having a good name for granting leave brings good men.

Birdwood's view was similar to the observation made by the Punjab School in 1859. The Punjab School claimed that soldiers hated being away from their land and families for a long time.[66]

Conclusion

The army supplied a host of incentives to soldiers, to project a benevolent image, in order to legitimize its authority over its personnel, and thus to extract sacrifices from them. A disciplinary infrastructure to control the troops meshed with the army's policy of 'caring' for its men. The army's control over soldiers was mainly hegemonic rather than coercive. The imperialists aimed to drive a cleavage among privates and Indian officers by supplying the latter with a greater amount of rewards. And soldiers were conscious of the special position they enjoyed

vis-à-vis civilians in the colonial framework. Thus the army was able to keep its loyalty mechanism intact.

The reward structure evolved haltingly. After 1857, the British were neither bent on revenge on all Indians, nor did they want to stop their recruitment. This was because they knew that, with the limited number of white troops available to them, they had to depend on the Indians.[67] The Mutiny represented both continuity and change as far as the evolution of the welfare bureaucracy was concerned. It marked no break in incentives like military jagirs. However, in the pre-1857 period, due to Bentinck's policy of reducing expenditure, the state had abolished many privileges like batta. But after 1857, as a reaction to the rebellion, the state became more generous. Privileges were not only reintroduced but also elaborated and systematized. Another reason for the implementation of the elaborate welfare network in the second half of nineteenth century was the anxiety that the existing quantum of welfare measures was inadequate to generate loyalty. As the British were not confident of their position, there was much debate within the army on how best to implement the welfare mechanism. The starting point of this programme was 1859—the immediate aftermath of the Mutiny—and the programme reached its peak just before 1914 with the imperial attempt to gear up the army in the face of the worsening international scenario.

The colonial army consolidated itself by a synthesis of indigenous elements (like bazaars) and imported western techniques (like gratuity). Colonialism depended on collaboration, and military collaboration was most vital. The welfare mechanism, and not brute force, prevented rebellions among the indigenous military collaborators. And this sustained colonialism in South Asia.

Endnotes

1. There are other theories which seek to explain military imperialism in South Asia. The technological determinist approach, as represented by Daniel R. Headrick in *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, asserts that superior military technology gave the British a decisive advantage. However, modern research shows that before 1850 the British enjoyed no significant technological edge

over the Indian powers. Moreover, in the second half of the nineteenth century, superior military technology was not of much use against the north-western frontier tribals, who lacked it. John Pemble, 'Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War', *Historical Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1976, pp. 375–404; T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849–1947*, Macmillan, London, 1998.

2. The other European elements imported to India for building the colonial army were the regimental institution and the court martial apparatus. These institutions absorbed indigenous elements in the course of their evolution in the subcontinent. Thus I differ from Stephen P. Rosen who, in *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, asserts that after 1859 the British integrated the Indian Army with the caste-ridden society.

3. William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its Organization and Administration* 1903, reprint, Low Price Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 3–27, 36–44, 296–300.

4. R. K. Saxena, *The Army of the Rajputs: A Study of 18th Century Rajputana*, Saroj Prakashan, Udaipur, 1989, pp. 2, 15, 23; Herbert Compton, *A Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784–1803*, 1892, reprint, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1976; Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs: 1799–1849*, Motilal Banarasidas, New Delhi, 1964.

5. Martin Blumenson, 'The Development of the Modern Military', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1980, pp. 670–82; Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495–1715*, Routledge, London, 1992, 2nd edition, 1997, 80.

6. The period 1870 to 1875 can be taken as representative of the second half of the nineteenth century. During those five years, 0.5 per cent of the Bengal and the Madras armies, 0.25 per cent of the Punjab Frontier Force, and 0.42 per cent of Bombay Army personnel deserted. During the same period, the percentage dismissed from these forces for indiscipline was very low. Only 0.5 per cent of Punjab Frontier Force, 0.58 per cent of Bombay Army, and 0.6 per cent of Bengal Army personnel were dismissed. Military miscellaneous minutes by Major General H. W. Norman, 1866–76 (hereafter Norman minutes), ch. 2, Bengal Army, general conditions, paras 60, 63, ch. 3, Madras Army, paras 36–8, ch. 4, Bombay Army, general remarks on the organization, paras 19–20, 11 Oct. 1875, National Archives of India (hereafter NAI).

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5

Sepoys' Links with Society: A Study of the Bengal Army 1858–95

Vivien Ashima Kaul

Soldiers and soldiering were as much part of the Indian social fabric as were ascetics and asceticism, agriculturists and agriculture, traders and trade. Each occupational group, unique in an identity of its own yet forming a composite and esoteric unity that was the Indian social structure, was held together by the ubiquitous phenomenon of caste. The unique '*caste system*' which is as much a social reality in the twentieth century as it was in the ancient past dominated norms and demarcated strata in Indian society. The Kshatriyas to whom were ascribed the warrior vocation were a superior group in this hierarchical system. A definite pattern of military values and traditions evolved from within the Kshatriya group. Indian martial traditions found roots in the indigenous setting yet successfully merged with the norms of the modern British mass military system.

Hindu tradition assigned the role of the warrior to the Kshatriyas, but armies in India consisted of men of different castes.[1] The Brahmins (the priestly caste) were so numerous that only a small proportion could be employed in sacerdotal functions and charity was not adequate to generate a living for them. Thus they were found in almost every occupation. There were a number of them in the old Bengal Army, and the name of one of their subdivisions, Pandey, became the generic term

by which the mutineers of 1857 were commonly known to the English in India.[2]

Indian soldiers like the soldiers of other lands generally shared the social and cultural background of their fellow countrymen, and what was important to Indian society as a whole was also important to the army.[3] The Bengal Army as part of the British Indian Army was a product of custom and tradition and local practice as much as, or really more than if it was of a monolithic and rationalized central design.[4] It provided a framework of discipline and organization within which the caste norms and traditions inherent to Indian society continued to operate.

The Bengal Army as part of the colonial army broadly denoted the body of troops that served under the Crown in India after 1858, and under the East India Company prior to that. This comprised the 'British' Army in India, that is European troops that were posted in the three presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, as well as 'Indian' (native) troops that formed the Indian component of the army in each of the presidencies. The constitution of the Indian Army was based upon the historical division of British India into three presidencies.[5] The separate presidential armies were amalgamated in 1895 to form the 'Army in India.' The term *Bengal Army* was, in a way, a misnomer since there was not a single native of Bengal proper in its ranks, and only a small part of it was stationed in Bengal.[6] Nevertheless, because it garrisoned Bengal presidency, the name came to stay, as did the titles of the two other presidency armies, that is the Bombay and the Madras armies. Since no centralization policy existed in the army, each of the presidency armies developed characteristics of its own.

In the pre-1857 Bengal Army, caste was central and triumphant.[7] The *Brahminization* of this army indicated that there was a larger induction of men from the higher castes than the lower castes. In fact, recruiting was carried out within clan so that certain regiments looked like one large family group. Social institutions and practices took precedence over the necessities of military life. So much so, the European element became half Hindu, and as in society at large absurdities of caste rather than soldiering skills determined status.[8] These characteristics drew the attention of officers and administrators who cautioned

against the dangers inherent in such a policy. Sir Henry Lawrence warned: 'Our sepoys are too much from the same parts of the country; Oude, the Lower Doab and Upper Behar. There is too much clanship among them and the evil should be remedied'.[9] Brigadier General John Jacob, who carried out a thorough investigation of the Bengal Army, argued that the faults which had led to the lamentable state of the army were those of the system and not of individuals.[10] Indiscipline among regiments was rampant and remedial measures too late in the making.

The sepoy Mutiny of 1857 virtually left the Bengal Army dismembered. Of the seventy-four regiments, only twelve remained loyal to the British during the Mutiny. The British were called upon to reconstruct the army not only in numerical terms, but to transform it into a loyal colonial force. The Honourable J. P. Grant reported that if the British were to hold Hindustan, the Bengal Army had to be reorganized without delay.[11] A Royal Commission headed by Sir Jonathan Peel was appointed to carry out a thorough investigation of the multifarious problems. An army commission, and the famous 'Punjab Committee', offered numerous suggestions.[12]

One of the major spheres of the reorganization lay in restructuring on the basis of recruitment policy, the caste composition of the regiments, and a reduction of the Indian component. Under the broader rubric of a 'mixed' system, each regiment was to be restructured according to a specific pattern. The 'general mixture' regiment had troops of all castes and were mixed indiscriminately; the 'class troop or company' regiment had two troops or companies comprising a particular caste; the district or village model had men from a specific district or racial group; and the 'class' regiment comprised men exclusively from one caste.[13] The authorities wanted to reduce number of *purbiya* sepoys who belonged to the upper castes. New levies, especially of men from different castes, including low castes, were raised in place of the old disbanded regiments. The zones of recruitment also shifted towards the North West Frontier and the Punjab. The Doab and Bihar were no longer considered appropriate recruitment zones. In 1864, guidelines were provided for the caste composition of regiments.[14] A wide variety of castes were recommended. The Brahmin and Rajput continued to be included amongst the

many social groups recommended but the number of men from the Punjab and the North West Frontier Provinces increased, as did the Gurkhas and Hillmen. These latter were famed for their military prowess, and were categorized as the martial races. Accordingly the recruitment zones also shifted towards the north-west. It is significant, nonetheless, that the 'Purab', did not altogether lose its importance, even while Punjab gained prominence. The Bengal Army continued to retain its Hindustani segment, while its Punjabi and Gurkhali segments increased.

This chapter maps the contours of British military in the reorganization of the post-Mutiny Bengal Army. The colonial army tacitly accepted the traditions and practices of the men into military life. The system of the Bengal Army, apart from its military derivatives and connotations, also drew from the culture and social background of the people. The military is not a martial reflection of state power alone, but a body of people who are inherent parts of the larger social structure. Discipline, power, and authority are symbols of military life, yet beyond those representations lies the most important constituent, the human element, the *soldier* or the *sepoy*, '*the man who is the actual bearer of arms*'. The military system thus acquired an adaptability to meet the requirements of the social milieu. The military hold over the country could only be successful if support were forthcoming from the soldiery itself.

Caste requirements, norms, and structures played an important role in the lives of the troops, but military service called for an abandonment of its rigidities. This led to a further duality in colonial policy, because the British also aimed at extending recruitment to men of all classes, particularly lower classes. Such a policy was a significant departure from the earlier reliance on men of high castes and from a martial background. The endeavour was not dictated by a new generosity but by pragmatic considerations: the men in their new status as soldiers were bound to be more obligated to the British and would thus make loyal soldiers.

This chapter is in three parts. In Part I I shall discuss how the restructuring of the Indian section of the Bengal Army was carried out within the parameters of various social factors. Part II examines certain issues that bring into focus the caste consciousness of the sepoy and the acquiescence of the army to

that. Part III examines the low-caste component and the performance of such troops.

I

Despite the General Orders of 1864, regiments did not always adhere to military guidelines in their caste composition as based on the system of 'mixtures'. The composition of reorganized regiments in the post-Mutiny period continued to be influenced by caste considerations. This was also visible in the promotion of the Indian officer cadre.

Conversion to Class Troop/company

One strategy of reorganization was that of converting regiments that had a homogenous composition to those with a 'general mixture'. While this strategy seemed likely, in theory, to foil another mutiny, tensions were apparent in its functioning. 'General mixture' regiments functioned reasonably well within the parameters of military discipline, but I suggest that there were currents of underlying tensions because the composition was so heterogeneous. Since the men belonged to different religious persuasions and castes, there were occasions when they appeared insensitive to the practices of the other. Thus various regiments resorted either consciously to a homogenous composition or were forced to realize that men within their regiments were aligning themselves with others of the same caste. Thus in practice the bid at heterogeneity only spawned another kind of homogeneity.

To avoid the tensions brought on by a heterogeneous composition the Bengal Cavalry regiments gravitated towards 'class troop' regiments wherein a troop consisted of men of a particular caste. Similarly in the Bengal Infantry, especially the Hindustani section of the army, the movement was towards the formation of 'class' regiments, with the entire regiment composed of men of one caste. Earlier such a trend was permitted only for Sikhs and Gurkhas, but by the 1880s this came to be accepted even for Rajputs, Brahmins, Jats, and Hindustani Muhammedans.

Apart from regiments that chose to form 'class regiments', individual men within regiments also clustered with other men

of their caste. Although this was unauthorized, men of the same caste grouped together as in the 5th Bengal Cavalry. The commanding officer found such an arrangement very practical: his men were more content than when they were with mixed castes; it saved on messing, hutting, tents, and ponies; it made the regiment more attractive to potential recruits who were ill at ease on joining, especially when there were men of different castes. More importantly, he found that men who clustered together were motivated to prove the worth of their caste and this led to efficiency, while pre-empting a general grouping against the British.[15]

The 7th Bengal Cavalry stationed at Morar (south-east of Gwalior) was another case in point. The officers realized that in practice it was difficult to expect a Brahmin and a Muslim, or a Muslim and a Sikh, each with his own habits, customs, and religious prejudices, to subsume their beliefs and live together in a mixed troop.[16] They found that having men of different races quarter together was a fiasco as they were hardly ever cordial or civil to each other. Since the caste composition of the regiment was Muslim, Rajput (Hindu and Muslim), Brahmin, Dogra, and Sikh, the regiment found a solution to its problems by placing each caste in a separate troop.[17] They also attempted to substitute troops with a greater bias, for those that were more liberal. Thus in 1885 they asked that a Rajput troop be substituted for a Brahmin troop because they found that the Brahmin had far too many religious prejudices.[18] This swapping was also beneficial because the army, given past experience, did not wish to concentrate the Brahmins in a single troop. This was rather harsh on the Brahmins of the north-west[19] as they were debarred from service in the cavalry. However, the regiment rethought this policy when its Brahmin troops performed faultlessly in an operation in Burma in 1887, thereby restoring their tarnished reputation.[20]

The Movement towards Class Regiments in the Hindustani Section of the Bengal Infantry

There were very few 'class' regiments in the Bengal Infantry in the 1860s and the 1870s.[21] But by the 1880s there was growing support for 'class corps' in the army because of the numerous

advantageous they enjoyed.[22] The soldiers also preferred these type of regiments to mixed regiments or even class company regiments because they found themselves in a minority among other social groups in those regiments. Thus the 14th, 15th, and 45th Bengal Native Infantry regiments faced a vexed situation as they veered towards being class company regiments. Initially they were almost exclusively composed of Sikhs. In 1883 they proposed to replace one company of Sikhs with a company of Mohammedans. This sparked off a controversy in the regiment and a fall in recruitment rate so that the proposal was ultimately amended.[23]

Although this system of class regiments did not suppress or diminish caste rivalry or 'latent racial and religious antagonism' between groups like the Sikh, Pathan, Hindu, Muslim, it had the benefit of rooting out any group whose trustworthiness had been questioned within the class company system, and retaining the best group. Thus each regiment came to be more battleworthy. Class regiments facilitated greater harmony between officers and sepoys both in the matter of promotions and in their day-to-day functioning. Other advantages included the inculcation of a spirit of healthy competition between regiments, as well as nurturing the esprit de corps of the regiment. Officers were convinced that the very composition of a regiment served as ready index of its reliability in the event of internal disturbance.

Over the years it also became evident that the best recruits of each class preferred to enlist in those regiments that were composed solely of their own castes. Thus regiments that were raised after 1887 were organized on the principle of class regiments. Interestingly, officers had supported this principle with great enthusiasm to the Army Commission of 1878, but it was not implemented at that point of time, out of deference to the opinion of the Punjab Committee of 1858 that had preferred mixed or class company regiments. Clearly, the army had become more sensitive to the social situation between 1878 and 1887.[24] Since the existing class regiments in the Bengal Army had proved exceptionally efficient, it came as no surprise when, by the early 1890s, the trend that had evolved over the years crystallized into official policy with the formation of more *class* regiments including the sixteen Hindustani regiments.[25]

This move to convert Hindustani regiments to class regiments was made in the hope that it would 'raise our troops to a level nearly approaching that of the best Punjab regiments, and cause them to take ranks as worthy successors to the sepoys of the old Bengal army whose gallantry was proved in numerous hard fought campaigns.'[26]

Certain classes were selected to form these class regiments of the Hindustani section of the Bengal Army. Among them were Rajputs, Hindustani Muhammedans, Brahmins, Jats, and Hillmen. The Rajputs were placed in seven regiments—the 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 13th, and 16th Bengal Infantry; the Hindustani Muhammedans in four regiments—the 5th, 12th, 17th, and 18th Bengal Infantry; the Brahmins in two regiments—the 1st and 3rd Bengal Infantry; and the Hillmen in one regiment—the 9th Bengal Infantry.[27] The choice of most of these classes was not surprising, given their reputation of being good warriors. However, the decision to include Brahmins in the new class regiments was significant considering the antipathy towards them after 1857.

British policy quite discernibly then took into account the social backgrounds of the men in the formation of these new regiments. The sepoys accepted the conversion of their regiments quite enthusiastically: statistics reveal that 5195 of the 7154 Indian officers, non-commissioned officers, and men readily accepted their transfer orders. A small number—346—however, refused transfer, while 1613 men on leave and furlough deferred decision until their return. Of these men too, the majority (1363) opted for transfer, while only 100 declined.[28]

The Socio-environmental Influence

British military policy did not encourage the entrenchment of a regiment in any one locality. Troops were required to travel away from their native surroundings and adapt to different geographical milieu. Regiments were thus posted from station to station. However, regular moves were not appreciated by the soldiers who found it difficult to adjust to new and strange environments. Over the years the British came to realize the importance of the socio-environmental factor for the well-being of the troops who were then stationed in familiar locales.

The example of 42nd Bengal Native Infantry is a case in point. It was stationed along with the the 43rd and the 45th regiments of the Native Infantry in Assam, Cachar, and the eastern region and was referred to as an Assam regiment. Notwithstanding the absence of any rigid rules governing the composition of the regiments, the Standing Orders of 1864 recommended that the Hindustani element in the regiment should not exceed one-fourth. In 1871[29] an order was issued whereby the purbiya element was to be replaced by Gurkhas, Nepalese, and Jurwahas. The order was carried out in most of these regiments so that the Hindustani element would gradually disappear. However, the composition of the 42nd Bengal Native Infantry was an exception because, beside having Hindustanis, Gurkhas, and Jurwahas, it also had two companies of Sikhs. The Sikhs had been inducted into the regiment in 1865 under Colonel Rattray's command. They enjoyed a reputation for bravery and were considered a 'fine set of men' of the 'martial races'. But serving in a geographical environment different from their own native environment exposed their limitations. The crucial test arose when they were sent to the densely forested and hilly regions of Nagaland and Cachar. They found it singularly difficult to adapt and 'physically they were not fit for marching in hilly country where short sturdy men were far better than tall and lanky men who quickly succumbed to the fatigues of hill marching'.[30]

In this exceptional situation, the men were up against strange odds. The very physique which was the pride of the Sikh sepoy hampered their efficiency, and the diet given to them added to their woes. Atta which was Sikh staple was not easily obtainable since the north-east was a rice-growing region. They were given rice in lieu of atta. This seriously affected them mentally and physically. Many fell ill and there were some fatalities. Not surprisingly, Sikh troops grew to dislike service in the Naga hills.[31]

The distance of this region from their native homes complicated matters. Proceeding on leave was a lengthy and cumbersome process. It was also very expensive because the cost of the long journey from Kohima to the Punjab for the Punjabi, or from Arrah to Ghazipore for the Hindustani, had to be met by the sepoy. Moreover, furlough was not easily granted.

The authorities realized that posting sepoys in regiments that were located at one end from their homes was fraught with problems. Consequently, the caste composition of the 42nd Bengal Native Infantry was amended and troops inducted from the north-east instead. A programme of exchange was carried out whereby Sikh troops were transferred out and Gurkha troops transferred in. The Sikhs were absorbed into other Bengal regiments, located elsewhere and with a large Sikh component[32] while the Gurkhas were transferred out from regiments that were not authorized to have them. More Gurkhas were brought in exchange for the Hindustanis of the 42nd from the 13th and the 18th Native Infantry. In addition to the Gurkhas who were seen as natural to the environment, the authorities also attempted to recruit, in lieu of the Sikhs, more Jurwahas because they were considered 'a very useful class of men on account of their skill in building huts and in all kinds of jungle work especially as Assam regiments were always on the move without camp equipage'.[33]

In order to make the 42nd Native Infantry a more efficient fighting force, the army amended the composition of the regiment to enable its men to adapt to the environment they were located in. Thus they tried to convert it into a Gurkha corps, but without causing any injustice or detriment to the future of the Sikhs and Hindustanis who had stayed on for purposes of promotion or pension.[34] It is noteworthy that the army's decision thereafter was to station only regiments of 'rice-eating castes' for service in Assam.[35] Clearly the army was forced to take cognizance of the relation between the geographical background of the sepoys and their effectiveness as a fighting force.

Composition, Reorganization, and Transfers

In 1882, a number of changes including the reduction of certain regiments, particularly those that had a larger element of low castes, were recommended.[36] The distribution of the forty companies from the reduced regiments among the thirty-seven regiments of Bengal Infantry was effected on an equitable principle so that promotions could be made fairly.

Transfers made at the time attempted to ensure that men were relocated to regiments which had men from similar backgrounds.

Thus a company of Jats from the 41st Bengal Native Infantry was transferred to the 21st Bengal Native Infantry which had a large Punjabi component, since it was commonly accepted, at least in military circles, that Jats identified easily with Sikhs.

Similarly, the 24th Bengal Native Infantry received a company of Rajputs and Brahmins from the 36th Bengal Native Infantry, because they already had a company of Punjabi Hindus, presumably Brahmins and Rajputs, and it was believed that they would adapt to the surroundings of a Punjab corps just as troops of the 41st Native Infantry had done. The 25th Bengal Native Infantry received a company of Brahmins and Rajputs from the erstwhile 36th Bengal Native Infantry[37] because it already had a large number of men of the aforementioned backgrounds. In their attempt to 'match' people of different backgrounds, the British felt that Dogras identified with Rajputs and thus included them under the category, Rajput, in some Punjab regiments. Thus a company of Brahmins and Rajputs[38] was sent to the 45th as it was composed of Sikhs, Punjabis, and a few Hindustanis (Punjabi Hindus and Dogras).

There were efforts to place together in the same company non-commissioned officers and sepoys from the disbanded regiments. When a disbanded company did not come up to the required strength, its men were collectively attached to a company of a regiment, thus ensuring that they would be able to adjust as easily as possible.[39]

Despite the best intentions of the army to band together men of a particular caste, a few miscalculations arose. A specific example was the 34th Bengal Native Infantry. Some non-commissioned officers and sepoys from the 34th Bengal Native Infantry were sent to the 28th Bengal Native Infantry which was essentially a Punjab regiment. This was a very unsuccessful move because these men promptly applied for discharge or a transfer to a Hindustani (purbiya) regiment on the plea that they had little in common with men of a Punjab regiment.[40] Meanwhile a Dogra company of the 28th Bengal Native Infantry was broken up to accommodate men who were transferred from the 34th Bengal Native Infantry since they were thought to resemble Rajputs. Military officials spared no efforts in extending a welcome to the new sepoys, and on their arrival, the band of the 28th was sent to the station to greet

them. A fatigue party was to load their luggage and help them at the station. These friendly overtures to make the men feel part of the new regiment and adapt to the new surroundings were not reciprocated by the dislocated sepoys who felt alienated in such surroundings. They asked for transfers to the 10th, 11th, 17th, 18th, or any other purbiya regiment. The military authorities acceded to their requests.[41]

Although most officers found it convenient to absorb all the men from a recently disbanded regiment into one company in the new regiment, the commanding officer of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry (Punjab Frontier Force) felt differently. While the break up of a company to accommodate men of another regiment had attendant problems, the incoming men belonged to different companies in the erstwhile disbanded regiment, and could easily be absorbed into different companies. Thus the disruption of an existing company could be avoided. More importantly, each regiment had its own traditions and customs which the newcomers could imbibe more easily when distributed amongst the different companies of the new regiment rather than when grouped together in one company, for then they would be encouraged to retain the traditions and customs of the old regiment.

The British organized transfers aimed at creating the least amount of friction between existing men and those transferred in. However, the presence of newcomers often created feelings of resentment because it increased competition for promotions. This discontentment was even more pronounced in the Indian Army because of the existing differences between the various classes that composed the army.[42]

Effect of Caste on the Issue of Promotions

The Royal Commission of 1858–9 recommended that the system of promotions of the native commissioned and non-commissioned officers be regulated on the principle of efficiency rather than seniority and that commanding officers of regiments should have the same power to promote non-commissioned officers as commanding officers of line regiments.[43] This was applicable to the Hindustani corps which were formed into class company regiments. The likelihood of companies formed of a particular class/caste having officers and non-commissioned

officers of a different caste was more pronounced in these regiments. However, gradually these corps were converted into companies of a single caste.[44] Between 1857 and 1872, a number of rulings on the system of promotions were issued by the government. Vacancies in the commissioned and non-commissioned grades of a regiment having class troops or companies could be filled up by men of the same class as that in which the vacancies took place.[45]

An inherent ambiguity seemed to mark the government's attitude towards promotions. As arbiter of justice, the government awarded promotions to those who best deserved them, but the caste composition of the army often worked against that role. In mixed regiments, the efficiency–seniority principle was flexible and the caste of the men an important criterion in determining promotions.[46]

Three criteria, all of which had a 'caste' bias, came to dictate promotions. First, it was thought best to promote a man of the same caste as his troops. Second, those of upper castes were promoted to officer rank. This was so because experience had shown that sepoys were loathe to accept orders from officers of a caste lower than theirs and this led to problems of discipline. Third, there was a bid to commission officers directly.[47]

The problems that arose in the 3rd, 16th, 14th, and 18th Bengal Cavalry led the authorities to realize the importance of promoting men who belonged to the same caste as their troops. These regiments were 'general mixture' regiments and the issue of promotions was a sensitive one. The Jat *sowars* of these regiments preferred men of their own caste as their officers, but this was not always feasible, as the Jats were not well educated and hence had limited potential as officers. Instead the Jats had sometimes to serve under men of other castes as men were transferred on promotion without taking into account the nationality of the troops into which they were being promoted.[48] The Jats did not extend a welcome to such officers and openly expressed unhappiness and animosity towards a Muhammedan officer. Not only did such a situation prove potentially dangerous, it also diminished the attractiveness of the regiment in the eyes of future recruits.[49]

The British found that officers from the lower classes, especially those who had risen from the ranks, could not escape

the stigma of their social backgrounds and often proved to be ineffectual officers because of it. Moreover, when away from regimental headquarters, these officers were often manipulated by the men, leading to a decline in the standard of the regiment.[50]

Men did not respect these officers who in turn had little influence over them. Sepoys expected their officers to belong to an upper caste and accorded respect to them not only out of deference to their senior position in the military hierarchy but because of their superior social position. Officers reinforced their rank by maintaining a certain reserve and decorum in their dealings. Even when out of uniform, they did not mix freely or eat with their erstwhile comrades in the ranks. However, sepoys found it difficult to accept the superior military position of lower caste officers and ignored the protocol that surrounded rank. Not surprisingly the British were forced to recognize that 'the native officer is just where his intrinsic social position puts him, no higher, and the chief man in the lines is the man who could have been chief if the English had never come to India at all, and the army had never been raised'.[51]

Experience also taught the British that rather than military rank it was the social status of an individual that allowed him to exercise authority over his fellow men. A British officer commented that if one were to visit the lines unannounced or during midday one would find that it was a man of high social status rather a native officer who commanded the attention of the men:

> Who is that sitting in a chair under a tree, laying down the law to a knot of men? Not a native officer who may indeed be standing among the audience, but a sowar of high social status. The British officer may think him the worst man in the troop, but to his countrymen he possesses what far outweighs any military rank or consideration.[52]

Although the British had intended to be fair employers they were forced to recognize that military rank, in the eyes of the sepoy, was meaningless unless reinforced by social rank. The case of the officers of the 23rd Pioneers in 1866–7, drove this point home. The commanding officer found that his officers who were of the low-caste Muzbee group could not exercise adequate authority over the men and thus were not up to the mark. He therefore requested the government to relax the

'seniority rule' for promotions to the commissioned grades and permit the appointment of Sikhs of a higher social position than could be found in the ranks, into the commissioned grades of the regiment. The government sanctioned these promotions based on the criteria of 'higher caste for officer' to this regiment, but this was only a temporary solution[53] because the British still hoped to locate and train men of officer potential from the lower castes.

But gradually the British also came to equate ability with social background. Thus they came to believe that rankers somehow did not make efficient native officers. Instead, native young men of 'good families' such as royal Rajput or Muhammedan families had it in them to make the officer rank.[54] Major General Sir Sydney Cotton, who commanded the Peshawar division, recommended in 1862 that native gentlemen of respectable families be given direct commissions. It was believed that the conduct of the corps in quarters as well as in the field was directly related to the social status of the officer: Only native officers of a status higher than that of the troops could command their respect and make effective officers. The authorities were convinced by these arguments and accepted promotions made on such a basis.[55] Interestingly enough, although the British did take cognizance of the need to resonate their system of promotions with the existing system of hierarchy and authority, they made appointments based on this resonance very sparingly.[56] Clearly it was a case of the army being forced to take cognizance of the social structures within which it was operating rather than of it doing so of its own volition and sensitivity to the social system.

II

Individual officers highlighted the importance of considering the caste requirements of sepoys to ensure both their loyalty and their engagement with the army. Thus Field Marshal Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C), (1885–90), argued that it was necessary, especially in peacetime, that every care be taken to respect the customs and the habits of the men for these were observances of religion and hence sacred to them.

He stressed that any disregard of these would lead to discontentment and even alienation among troops. In times of war, the same course was to be followed as far as the exigencies of service would permit. Experience had taught him that when employed in the field, the sepoy's soldierly instincts were strong enough to prevent him from allowing his caste or religious observances to become a military inconvenience.[58]

The army undertook a formal initiative to sensitize and familiarize the officers with the caste observances and characteristics of the various groups from which the sepoys came, by ordering the compilation of a series of handbooks.[59] Material for these handbooks was variously obtained. Commanding officers of these Indian regiments were asked to provide information on issues bearing directly or indirectly on the efficiency of the various castes as soldiers. Also, the Governments of the Punjab, the North Western Provinces and Oudh, Bengal and the Central Provinces were asked to gather data on them.[60]

In this section, I focus on certain areas that threw the caste consciousness of the sepoy into relief. The men brought with them an alternative to the military consciousness: they lived in a dual world and believed in more than one system of authority and power. In what follows, I look at the British engagement with this alternative consciousness that was presented to them in the everyday actions, reactions, and opinions of its sepoys.

Caste Rules

Men in the regiments followed caste rules as rigidly as if they were in their villages, imposing social sanctions for their violation. Both the sepoys and Indian officers did not hesitate to punish offenders. An incident from the Guides corps highlights the workings of this process. Chunder Beer, a Gurkha sepoy, married a woman of inferior caste, and as a consequence 'lost caste'. He was then punished by being ostracized, and all the men of the regiment were forbidden to take *hookah-pani* with him, until he made amends by undergoing certain purificatory rites performed by Brahmins, and paid a fine of Rs 25 to the Raja of Sirmoor. Sepoy Tameh, a good friend of Chunder Beer, refused to obey these orders and continued to

befriend him only to 'lose his caste' as well. Both soon realized the discomfort of the situation and were eager to regain their caste and status. They underwent the rites and paid the fine. Subedar Harkabeer of the regiment promised to forward the money to the Raja. Interestingly, neither of them thought of taking recourse to military law, for this was a matter which concerned them as men of a caste, rather than as men of arms, and belonged, at least in their perception, outside the sphere of military governance.[61]

Interactions: The Sepoy and the Doctor

Another interesting arena in which the issue of caste surfaced was in the interaction of doctor and sepoy. Native commissioned medical officers as representatives of modern science could be seen as men with a universal mission and above caste norms. However, despite the sterility and non-denominational status endowed on these men by their medical uniforms, they continued to be subject to caste practices especially in their interaction with sepoys. Hence, whenever a native commissioned medical officer was posted to a regiment which was composed of castes to which he did not belong, complications arose. I cite the case of the 20th Punjab Infantry as an example.

Surgeon B. Gupta was posted in 1876 to the regiment. This regiment was composed entirely of trans-Sutlej[62] men, all of whom (especially those of tribes from beyond the frontier from which nearly half the regiment was enlisted) looked with contempt upon 'down country races'. Dr Gupta belonged to one such regiment. Apart from belonging to an 'inferior' race, he was of 'dark colour'. This was enough to set up initial barriers between the men and him, and a crisis arose when two Indian soldiers died of some illness and the men lost faith in him completely. Although he was not to blame, the sepoys attributed the deaths to his incompetence. They complained against him and attendance at the hospital dwindled. European officers, on the other hand, found him quite competent professionally.[63] The commanding officer was in a quandary because he felt that he could not permit Indian troops to dictate who they wanted as their doctor, particularly since Dr Gupta held Her Majesty's Commission. At the same time, he realized that the

presence of the doctor was likely to be prejudicial to the interests of service and hence recommended that he be posted out. The government did not want to encourage such dictation from the men and wanted native professional men to be able to hold medical charge of native regiments. Simultaneously, it was recognized that men of the 'northern races' that comprised this regiment would not accept the doctor's continued presence. A solution was reached when a doctor was required to accompany a detachment of sappers to Roorkee and Dr Gupta was deputed to be the one.[64]

While the matter was quite controversial, the army and the medical department found that it was in their interest to post Indian doctors with discretion and caution. They realized that the issue of the class or caste of the corps to which the officer was being posted required consideration, for it was a sensitive and crucial one.[65]

Questions of Loyalty: Guard Duties

Since the sepoys were subject to the military code, the very nature of the service demanded a form of unquestioning obedience. However, there were some rare instances in which the issue of caste interfered in the men's performance of their duties. A situation at the fort of Chunar in 1880 illustrated this.[66] In this case, interestingly enough, it was the British authorities that saw the caste of men as deterring the smooth functioning of their duties, because of the prejudice they had come to have against men of certain castes. The problem was thrown into relief when a group of Kuka prisoners was housed at the fort at Chunar, and coincidentally had to be guarded by a detachment of Sikh soldiers of the 10th Bengal Native Infantry that had, till then, not done its turn of guard duty. The Sikhs, however, were suspect in the eyes of the officer commanding the fort at Chunar because he had personal recollection of the events of January 1874 when Sikh troops had assisted in the escape of prisoners, and was not prepared to have such a detachment sent to him. Moreover, at that time two Sikh sepoys, Sepoy Jawahir Singh and Naik Harsahai, were under surveillance for misconduct. Hence the officers of the fort were wary of entrusting the Kuka prisoners to Sikhs guard. A solution to

the problem caused by the caste of the men was reached when the commanding officer of the regiment argued that this company was composed of Jat troops and commanded by a *subedar* who was a Jat himself and that it had only over twenty-one Sikhs. Although the commanding officer argued that the company could be relied on because it had a predominantly Jat rather than Sikh composition, he was actually confused about the caste affiliations of his men. The annual caste return showed that the regiment had ninety-nine Jat Sikhs and no Jats.[67] Moreover, the company, supposedly Jat in composition, was commanded by a Sikh jamadar (the Subedar of the Company was on furlough), and had a large Sikh component consisting of one Indian officer, one *havildar*, nineteen sepoys, and several others who were on furlough.

While the commanding officer clearly saw the Jats as more reliable than the Sikhs, the vexed issue of whether the 'Jat' company could be sent up for duty at the fort remained because formerly orders had been given that Sikh troops should not be sent, and orders on that subject had not since been changed. The army authorities deemed that the Jat company (actually Sikh) could carry out its duties faithfully. However, they felt that as long as the Kuka prisoners were at the fort, the situation was quite precarious. The government considered it undesirable that in the future Sikh soldiers be sent to garrison the fort, and every precaution was taken to prevent troops from aiding state prisoners to escape.[68]

The incident reveals that although the British had given to the native man the trappings of a soldier, they were still uncertain of when the chinks of caste would appear in the armour that they had given him. They saw the men as torn between bonds to their caste and their bonds to the state and realized that the competition posed by caste bonds to the bonds of state was not only a mere possibility but a threatening probability.

Matter of Dress: Shoeing

The power that the sepoys' caste and class backgrounds still played in their lives was brought into focus over an issue as trivial as that of the shoes of the sepoy army. Shoes were an important part of the sepoy's armour because uncomfortable

footwear could seriously impair performance and a lame soldier was not of much use.[69]

The type of shoe that the sepoy wore depended on the region from where he came, and indirectly on the 'class' to which he belonged. Some sepoys like those from Punjab wore the Punjabi or Peshawari *chappal* which was comfortable, inexpensive, and more importantly fitted the needs of their new role as soldiers. Others, however, wore footwear that either hampered their performance as sepoys or seemed like a strange accessory to their westernized uniforms. The Afridis, for example, who generally wore grass or leather sandals, wore a thick heavy shoe in the ranks which rapidly caused blisters and lameness.[70] Similarly, the normal Hindustani chappal worn by the Hindustani troops seemed a strange accessory to the westernized uniform, and was uncomfortable for both long marches and battle. Men of both these groups frequently ended up with severely blistered feet and were even admitted to hospitals.

Therefore, different types of western shoes were introduced by commanding officers of regiments as 'experiments in footwear'. While, the regular ammunition boot would have been the most sensible of footwear, it was unfeasible because it had to be worn with woollen socks or bandages, articles which no Asiatic soldier ever wore. Additionally, the men perceived the use of socks or bandages with their boots as irksome and uncomfortable as well as being an additional expense. Since the 'shoeing' of the army posed a major problem to the authorities, a committee was set up to investigate the issue in 1876. This committee based its report on the experience of a camp of exercise held at Delhi.[71] A variety of regiments, representing the different classes of which the Bengal army was composed, had marched long distances to attend the camp. This served as an excellent opportunity of securing the opinion of British and Indian officers, and men of all races regarding the question under consideration.[72]

The committee decided that to enforce a uniform pattern of shoeing for the native army was objectionable. Even if the shoeing of the native army did not conform to the dictates of uniformity, it was well worth permitting men of different classes to use the type of footwear that they were accustomed to and that could be decided upon regimentally.

The committee also recommended three different designs of shoes for selection by the regiments concerned. One of them was the 'native shoe' according to regimental pattern which could be worn with or without a stocking and was procurable or could be made to order in every bazaar. It was cheap, portable, and in keeping with the costumes and habits of the wearer, as well as conducive to his comfort both on duty and off it. The second design was the 'ammunition or blucher' boot as worn by the British soldier. The third was the 'English shoe' of 'Oxford' shape with a broad, straight sole and a strap across the instep, fastening to a buckle on the outer side. This design proved better than 'blucher' boot because it was less expensive, lighter, and better suited to the leg of the native soldiers in gaiters.[73] Also, where the men agreed to the idea of wearing the ammunition or blucher boot, or the oxford shoe,[74] the committee recommended that the government sanction the proposed manufacture and supply at lowest possible rates from the factory at Kanpur.[75]

Thus the authorities were forced to recognize the native's footwear as part of the cultural baggage that he brought with him to the military world. Rather than destroy this piece of baggage as an unnecessary appendage, they, in their pragmatism, thought it best to retain it, while introducing newer kinds of footwear.

The Performance of Duties: Farriers, Coolies, and Menial Work

It was not merely in matters of dress but also the nature of duties that the army had to contend with caste. The unwillingness of men to work in occupations that they considered beneath caste brought this out. The work that men voiced their objection to was that of farriers and coolies and menial work.

Since the efficiency of a cavalry regiment was dependent to a large degree on the health and shoeing of their horses, farriers were in great demand. Hence cavalry regiments normally had eight farriers. This was, however, inadequate to meet the needs of the horses, and hence each regiment trained at least one man per troop to shoe horses. The ordinary *sowar* generally did not object to performing the work of a farrier in an emergency,

but had a natural disinclination to be called upon to regularly perform such tasks, as he also had to attend to parades, musketry, and other functions. Besides that he looked upon such work as derogatory since it was the task of lower caste. Generally farriers came from a low-caste Hindustani Mohammedan background and had for generations worked as *lohar mistris*, and were artisans rather than soldiers. Not surprisingly, the sowar, who was often a Punjabi Mohammedan or a Rajput or Brahmin, was ill at ease performing such tasks and made an indifferent farrier.

Regiments therefore asked for additional farriers. Also, in order to avoid the problem of training sowars to become farriers, commanding officers were thereafter permitted to enlist men of the castes they considered most appropriate for the post of farrier.[76]

A few native light infantry regiments which were localized in Assam also encountered problems in assigning men duties that went beyond those of plain and simple soldiering. Since these regiments were located in dense forests and marshlands, transportation in the area was quite difficult and the sepoys often had to act as porters. This combination of the functions of soldier and coolie was not satisfactory to the men and was even recognized by the C-in-C as so. He pointed out that such a combination of roles could hurt the caste prejudices of many of the classes from which the fighting men were ordinarily recruited.[77]

In this case, even though the army recognized the need to desist from asking the men to perform tasks that they considered menial, it proferred other reasons to account for bringing in men who would act solely as porters. The reason it offered both camouflaged and significantly diminished the importance of the men's backgrounds in their unwillingness to perform certain tasks. The army rationale argued that since the combatant strength of the native troops was just about adequate to maintain peace on the frontier and meet the numerous military requirements of the province, any measure that could reduce the strength of the fighting corps by one-fifth would prove very embarrassing especially in the event of disturbances. Therefore, to avoid a situation where troops would feel that caste sentiments had been dishonoured it was best that menial

duties be separated from soldiering and a coolie corps of 150 men per regiment set up. These coolies were to be enlisted regularly and trained as fighting men and were to serve well just as the *dooly* bearers and water carriers did.[78]

Even the Gurkhas, considered amongst the least caste conscious of Indian troops, were on occasion rather fastidious about tasks they considered beneath their dignity. The 38th Bengal Native Infantry had two companies of Chuttries (Rajputs), two companies of Jat, two of Gurkhas, one of Aheer, and one of Kurmis. The two companies of Gurkhas were prepared to do any kind of work during war but were resentful of doing menial work during peace. This attitude became apparent when there was a proposal to convert this battalion into a Pioneer regiment. Such regiments were noted for their experience in road building and other construction works, but the superior castes did not appreciate functions of such a nature. The commanding officer said, 'I know of no men who are more particular on that head than the higher caste of Gurkha'. Like the others they would not kindly or willingly take to the work that Pioneers performed. This was because of the likelihood of taunts by their caste fellows in other regiments for agreeing to undertake such work.

The authorities realized that until the level of education progressed greatly and work of all types was looked upon as honourable, menial tasks were best not assigned to upper castes.[79] It is worthy of notice that despite the British acceptance of the caste factor, they did not see it as a permanent problem, hoping to eventually do away with it through education and the modern vision that they saw themselves as harbingers of.

Commensality:
Messing Arrangements and Kitchens

Matters of commensality provided fertile ground for the intricacies of caste dynamics to interfere with the smooth functioning of the army. The camp of exercise held at Delhi in 1874 was one of the many times when commensality became an issue that the army was forced to address. The servants provided were Mohammedans and not all classes of men could accept food and water from them. Castes such as Brahmins and

Rajputs simply did without water and other necessities, rather than defile caste norms.[80]

Since the men were guided by certain regulations in their cooking and eating procedures, the army did its best to allow the men to maintain their ritual purity. Thus the various groups continued to follow their elaborate customs and rules surrounding the issue of commensality. The case of Kanaujiya Brahmins is one example. When the Brahmin was away from home, he prepared his own food and even ate it alone. He ate the prescribed meats, indulged in *bhang* and opium, chewed tobacco, but did not smoke. Also, like other orthodox Hindus, he divided his food into two categories, *pakki,* i.e. food fried in ghee, and *katchi*, which was food cooked in water. In order to accommodate these needs of the Brahmin, each man was provided with his own cooking space, the *chauka*. This was 5 feet square that had a *chula* in it, which was swabbed regularly with a mixture of mud and cowdung. The cooking of each meal was itself an elaborate ritual: the Brahmin would place the materials for the meal within the *chauka*, then he would step out, purify himself by either washing his feet or bathing and changing his dhoti or loincloth. Many Brahmin sepoys, however, avoided the latter in cold weather.[81] If a Brahmin was cooking for a party of his *bhaibunds*, he followed the same procedure, sometimes embellishing it with prayers said facing the east, in case he was very orthodox.

The beverages the Brahmins had were mainly milk and *sherbets*. They did not drink water from an ordinary *masak* or *pakhel*. Hence drinking water had to be carried in iron, zinc, or copper vessels, specially made so that they could be carried on muleback. In cantonements, iron buckets called *dols*, which were quite cumbersome, had to be used.

These ritual observances not only ordered a man's commensal relations but also identified him as belonging to a certain community. However, with changes that came over time, or lapses in observances, many of the identifying marks were effaced, at least for the outside observer. Yet the men continued to adhere to at least one ritual that would distinguish them. The Commanding Officer of the 1st Bengal Infantry discovered that although the Sarwariya Brahmins were strict vegetarians, their aversion to meat had worn off and the only practical difference

between them and Kanaujiya Brahmin was that the latter carried *laddus*, instead of *puris* in their haversacks. The distinction, although a very trivial one, was always rigidly adhered to by the men, to emphasize their distinctiveness.[82]

Messing in a Brahmin regiment was thus quite a sensitive issue. In some cases where the army could not provide each man with a personal chauka, they provided each man with a daily ration of ghee, parched gram, *chura*, salt, and sugar with a gallon of water per diem.[83] The requirements of Sanadhya Brahmins who were strict vegetarians were so met with for they could not eat from the mess when on board a ship.

Dogra Brahmin sepoys were punctilious in matters relating to their food and drink and preferred to cook their own food. Company cooks were often rendered redundant and reduced to becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water and general labourers. Later, however, food was cooked by the squadron or company cook.[84]

However, as time went by the Brahmins followed a truncated ritual: they would only remove their boots or shoes before entering the chauka. They also allowed themselves to lapse in ritual observances as circumstances dictated. Thus, although the only garment that Brahmins were permitted to wrap themselves in while eating was the dhoti, they often wore woollen garments when in a cold climate. And, as and when required, they both cooked and ate their food without removing their footwear. In the Zhob Valley expedition in 1884–5, Brahmin sepoys of the 1st Bengal Infantry gave up ritual bathing and cooked and ate their food in woollen garments.[85] Again, although wine and spirits were strictly forbidden, many a Brahmin on service could be induced to drink rum provided it was issued as a medicine.[86] Also, while on service, some of them did not object to drinking water from pakhels, provided they were made of canvas of goatskin.[87]

Although the men insisted on maintaining the rules that surrounded their commensal relations and the army aided them in so doing, the very gathering together of various castes in the army and the spread of modern ideas brought about changes in attitude. Earlier, no superior caste would eat or drink from the hands or vessels of an inferior caste or even smoke from their pipes, but the spread of modern ideas did much to modify

strict adherence to ancient customs.[88] Thus Brahmins, Rajputs, and even the Rathis would eat pakki *roti* together. Like the British who acquiesced to the requirements of caste, but did not accept them as permanent, these men found reason within ritual law to justify this act of eating together: since the *pakori* was fried in ghee, it was purified sufficiently to eliminate any fear of a higher caste losing status by eating with a lower caste.

Men also devised ingenious ways of circumventing caste requirements within the parameters of the rules of caste. The Garhwali was a case in point. He observed practices like other Hindu troops and also harboured a prejudice against sheep with long tails. Roti, *shikar, tarkari*, could be eaten anywhere in any dress and taken from anyone from whom water was acceptable, in other words all Hindus except the Doms and Bhotiyas.[89] *Bhat* and *dal* could only be eaten in the vicinity of the cooking place. The Garhwali would professedly eat rice and dal cooked only by those castes from whom he had been accustomed to accept food at home or from castes whom he considered to be equal or superior to his own. However, this matter was one of mutual agreement and resolved into an understanding that 'if you eat rice and dal cooked by me I will eat them cooked by you' but not otherwise.[90]

Also, some men were less meticulous than others. The Gurkha Hindu was definitely less fastidious than his other counterparts. Nevertheless, men of superior Gurkha castes would not eat rice and dal with inferior castes and formed little messes of their own, varying in numbers from two or three men to a dozen. As bachelors, Magars, Gurungs, Limbus, Rais, Sunwars ate every kind of food in common, which they continued after marriage, except rice and dal. Thakurs who had not adopted the thread could eat everything with Magars and Gurungs. The Gurkhas had a preference for shikar which meant all the prescribed meats.[91] All classes drank water from the same masak, which was made of goatskin. Although the Gurkha performed minor washing rites (washing of hands and removal of *pagri* and shoes) before cooking, his ceremonies were brief in comparison to other Hindus and he was done with cooking and eating in less than one-fourth the time that other soldiers took. During war, the Gurkha would readily carry several days' provisions in his haversack, and he did not regard foreign

service as 'polluting' like the orthodox Hindu.[92] Moreover, Gurkhas enjoyed drinking all kinds of spirits and their regiments were often referred to as the '*spirit drinking*' regiments. (The Sikhs were another.) They made a type of rice beer called *jaur*, and a spirit called *rakshi*,[93] though they preferred good commissariat rum.

Since the Sikh sepoy was not under religious prescription as the Brahmin sepoy, certain messing arrangements could be made. According to Sir John Lawrence, the Muzbees had few or no caste prejudices. They messed together as did other Sikhs and 'their line of march would never be burdened with the numerous cart loads of brass pots without which a Hindustani corp could never move'.[94]

When Sikh company formed part of a regiment, they were granted two cooks per company. This practice was prevalent in the Punjab Frontier Force. The langris became an essential feature of the messing system in Sikh or other Punjab regiments and assisted in improving the quality of life of the sepoy. They worked extremely hard and after a long day's march they were up the better part of the night cooking for the sepoys.[95] Since these men and their functions were so essential for the well-being and morale of the troops, the question of 'family pensions' for heirs of langris was debated.

Although some men seemed amenable to accepting changes in the laws that governed commensal relations and diet,[96] many remained steadfast to the norms that governed this aspect of their lives. Even though authorities found the demands of caste requirements in the matter of food quite tiresome, they realized that any move to disregard these would prove disastrous. The Mutiny of 1857 had after all been catalyzed on the basis of a rumour that the British had flouted the essential commensal norms of the men.

Festivals and Worship

The soldiers life was not dictated solely by the military calendar and the military's notion of time. His year was punctuated by sacred time embodied in his festivals and his days marked by the moments and places of worship. The British thought it wise to accept this alternative to the military rhythm of time. Hence

holidays were observed on Basant Panchmi, Shivratri, Holi, Sawan Sakrati, Riki Tarpan, Janam Ashtmi, Dasai, Diwali and Maghia Sakrat as the Hindu soldiers observed these. In fact these days, as well as festivals of other creeds were to be observed as holidays and were not in any way to be curtailed or interfered with but to be granted in full.[97]

Apart from granting the men holidays to celebrate their festivals, some regiments attempted to collectively celebrate the festivals. In some cases these festivals became expressions of regimental solidarity and might. Since Dasai was the chief festival of the Gurkhas and the men endeavoured to celebrate it whether in quarters or in the field, every man in the regiment subscribed towards the expenses. The commanding officer often gave a buffalo or two and each British officer also subscribed towards the celebrations. During celebrations of Dasai the arms of the regiment were piled up, tents erected, spectators invited to witness the dexterity of the men in severing the heads of buffaloes and young goats. The period of the festival was considered auspicious for undertaking wars and expeditions. During the festival of Durga Puja celebrating the victory of the goddess Durga over the demon Mahisasur, the Gurkhas worshipped their colours and implements of war, petitioning the gods for their protection throughout the year, believing that it was to the sword that they owed their prosperity.[98] On the fourth day of Dasai celebrations, sacrifices of buffaloes, male goats and sheep were made before the goddess. Diwali, the festival of lights, was also celebrated with great joie de vivre and gambling was permitted during this period.

Although the British used the collective effervescence at festivals to strengthen the ties of the soldier to his regiment, various rites of passage that a sepoy was expected to perform took him away from his regiment. There was thus both a spirit of affinity and a spirit of competition between a man's military sense of time and the sacred and caste sense of it.

III

This section analyses the British military attempt to erase the Brahminized image of the army by widening the social base of

recruitment. Consequently men from all ranks of society, particularly lower classes could join the army. This was not an entirely innovative practice. In the earlier years of British rule they had recruited from such categories. Traditional Indian society viewed the Kshatriyas as the warrior caste, nevertheless men from various castes including low castes had served in the armies in earlier years. The British undertook this enterprise mainly because of the necessity of identifying troops that would remain loyal, nevertheless making certain that social equations remained undisturbed.

Background

The acceptance of low-caste men into the reorganized army began on a controversial note as seen in the findings of the Peel Commission (1858–9). Three definite trends were delineated. One trend that was distinctly anti low caste, upheld the old theory that there was direct correlation between caste and military potential: only men of higher castes or with martial backgrounds made soldiers. The second decried this argument and was pro low-caste recruitment. The third held a neutral stance.

Those who argued against low-caste recruitment focused on stereotypical negative characteristics in the personality of low-caste men. These men, they argued, were subservient, lacked authority, were immoral, and could not make decisions. Moreover they had poor physical appearance and general hygiene and, more importantly, an absence of pride in the profession. Those who argued in favour emphatically stated that these social groups had been deprived of a position in society for years and years, because of the social strata into which they had been born. This could be corrected if they were given the correct environment, training, facilities and encouragement that men of higher castes had enjoyed for centuries. They would gradually be uplifted and acquire new attitudes, personality, and authority. Those who maintained a neutral stand did not agree to caste in principle and argued that any man who was well trained and disciplined could, irrespective of caste, make a good soldier.[99]

There were also various antecedents to this policy. Although the image generally projected of the old Bengal Army was that

of a majoritarian Brahmin force, there had nonetheless been recruitment from the lower castes, and in the early nineteenth century the Bengal army had become quite a conglomeration of castes. Additionally, both the Madras and Bombay armies also recruited many low castes and other ethnic groups.[100]

In the early 1800s, the British discovered the potential of men from lower castes. Colonel James Skinner of Skinner's Horse commended the valour of men who were unknown in the ranks of the Bengal Army and were no longer deemed martial, but were the ones who had defended Bharatpur against General Lake. There were the Papees of Oudh who were always employed by high-caste *talukdars* when anything desperate had to be done—the Kungs (gypsies), Nutts, Sweepers, and the Malla or boatman race. He recommended these classes of men and others for recruitment to the army, convinced of their military prowess.[101] But European officers who subscribed to considerations of caste refused to recruit them.

Indian rulers had also employed lower castes, if only to serve as a check upon the higher castes, who they feared would aspire to supremacy. Many different low castes and tribes thus saw military service in the years before 1857. The Mahars of western India were probably the most heavily recruited (Bombay Army). In Madras, the Pariahs and the Christians constituted about 5 per cent of the army and in a few units the percentage increased to approximately 10 between the years 1780 and 1880. In the Bengal Army there was a similar percentage of low castes, and the Chamar leaders of today claim that the numbers were quite significant.[102]

The military code of 1807 stressed the need for recruitment from the higher castes, which indicates that lower-caste recruitment was already prevalent. This decision was countered by representations from low-caste men who were serving in the army. Their performance in all the three armies had been reasonably good and this encouraged them to seek promotions. Since the British wanted to avoid provoking any resentment in the officer cadre, they narrowed the base of recruitment down to the 'respectable classes of society', except under special circumstances. Recruitment for the cavalry was carried out from amongst the superior castes and the desirability of having the entire army composed only of superior castes was expressed,

even though that was not possible. The military committee specially appointed to study the problem decided to restrict recruitment of men of 'exceptional character' from the lower classes to a particular section of the army. Clearly, while the army had recruited men from the lower castes before this new policy, it had done so in a very restrained fashion, enduring that the social status quo between the various castes continued to be reflected among soldiers.

The army periodically passed various regulations that curbed the hegemony exercised by the upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, but quite in contradiction to that, the government was prepared to have even more Rajputs notwithstanding their upper-caste status.[103] Regulations, however, were not sufficient to deter the Brahmin from enlisting, and he did so under the garb of a Rajput. Similarly, the lower-caste man masqueraded as an upper caste by adopting an upper-caste name at the time of enrolment. Since it was impossible to prevent fraud, Sir William Bentick decided to revoke the restrictive measure, and in 1834 issued an order that all objections to men belonging to the respectable classes of the native community or preference among such classes on account of caste or religion should cease to operate. He also ordered sepoys of the 59th regiment of Bengal Infantry to re-enroll in their original names and castes.[104]

The British also seemed to notice the potential of the low-caste man as 'sepoy' during times of crises. During the Mutiny (1857), the low-caste sepoy was remembered. A number of levies consisting of low castes were hurriedly raised to the ranks deserted by the mutineers. The more prominent among them were the Allygurh, Agra, Futtegarh, Bareilly, Bijnore, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Meerut, Mynpoorie, and Shahjehanapore levies. Generally the composition was mixed and the low castes included, Jats, Chamars, Bhungees, Ahirs, Lodhs, Khuttecks, Gorereahs, Naos, Menas, Korees, Kumars, Kayuths, Bhals, Mahajans, Tamoolees, Orlis, Durjees, Goosains, Bairaigis, Malees, Kulwars, Morars, Gujars, Kunjurs, Kuhars, and Dhanucks.[105]

This policy was also directed by a search for new loyalties, which the British thought could be found among the lower castes. In doing so, they hoped to initiate a symbiotic relationship between the lower caste soldier and themselves: he would look to them for protection[106] and would regard them as his

mai-baap and they in turn would benefit from his obligation to them. They were aware that pre-British India society, although traditional, did allow for social mobility of individual castes within the local hierarchy.[107] Within the Indian social context, the caste system had inherent to it a process of mobility whereby people of a particular caste occupation could adopt another profession. Upward mobility by adopting the customs of higher castes was also acceptable within the system.[108]

There appears to have been a cyclical pattern in recruitment with phases of low-caste recruitment gaining popularity and then gradually receding. In times of warfare, and as the British were expanding their dominions, low-caste recruitment was quite acceptable, but as the British consolidated their power, the number of lower castes in the army decreased.[109]

The New Policy

In September 1860 after the issue of low-caste recruits was studied thoroughly, then C-in-C, Sir Hugh Rose, submitted to the government a report on the newly raised levies and strongly advised the government to recruit low castes into military service.[110] Despite these recommendations, some degree of uncertainty apparently prevailed because the Governor General in Council did not issue any elaborate or precise orders for the mixture of castes in regiments. His only stipulation was that not more than two-thirds upper castes should be enlisted. In respect of the 'other castes', the commanding officer was to use his discretion. The periodic returns contained a specification of the castes of the men and guidelines stated that a reasonable proportion of about one-third were to be higher and two-thirds lower castes. No General Order regarding the prohibition of recruitment of upper castes was issued, but all commanding officers were intimated accordingly.[111] In 1864, a Standing Order offered guidelines for the composition of the various regiments. Most of the regiments of the infantry were advised to have a minor representation of low castes such as the Ahirs, Dhanuks, Pasis Lodhs, Mehtars, Chamars and Gujars, besides an admixture of 'Hindus of inferior castes'[112] and men of 'all races and tribes'. Apparently, the separate classification of 'Hindus of inferior castes' was an indicator of their otherwise

low social status, which the military was prepared to overlook for recruitment. Quite interestingly, men of the Bengal Cavalry were to be recruited from the better echelons of society and in the 'caste returns' for the cavalry there was no category of 'low castes'.

The policy decreed that the levies (composed of men from lower castes) which had been raised during the Mutiny be reorganized into regiment based on the class company system. While some regiments were already constituted in this manner, other regiments were to be reorganized accordingly and were to have one company of 'Hindus of inferior castes' such as Gujars, Lodhs, and Muzbees. The other companies were to have Hindus, Gurkhas, Sikhs, Punjabi Muhammedans, Hindustani Muhammedans, Jats, Afridis, etc. Furthermore, some individual companies were to composed either entirely of low-caste men or of high-caste men. In doing so, the authorities ensured that distinctions between upper and lower castes remained, but they also prevented total subservience of the low castes to upper castes.[113]

Performance of Low-caste Groups

The degree of success in the army varied among the low caste groups. The Muzbee Sikhs gained recognition as brave and courageous soldiers even though they were ranked as social outcastes among the Sikhs. In 1857 Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner Punjab, decided to induct the Muzbees into military service.[114] The 23rd and the 32nd Pioneers consisted of Muzbee Sikhs.

The occasion arose during the seige of Delhi, where the services of additional men were required because the Bengal Sappers and Miners at Roorkee had broken out in revolt. The formation of three companies of eighty men each was ordered and Lieutenant Dyas sought volunteers from the Muzbee labourers employed on the canal works at Madhopur.[115] These men marched to Delhi, poorly equipped and poorly clothed. Enroute they were attacked by a party of rebels, but they managed to save the ammunition and treasure. Their performance warranted the addition of two more companies to the regiment, the fourth and fifth, which were enlisted at Lahore

and Amritsar. This was followed by the raising of the sixth and seventh at Madhopur. Later, more companies were added consisting of both Muzbees and Ramdasis. The reputation of the Muzbee as a soldier was established.[116]

This regiment with its strength of ten companies came to be designated the 24th Punjab Infantry in 1858. By 1861, this establishment was reduced to eight companies, with a total of 712 native ranks.[117] In 1862 they were given a new identity and designated the 32nd (Pioneers) Native Infantry. Thereafter, the establishment of sepoys increased from 600 to 720 in 1881.[118]

The story of the 23rd[119] Pioneers was similar. It was composed entirely of Muzbee Sikhs and began as the 15th regiment of the Punjab Infantry. Like the 32nd Pioneers, it was raised during the Mutiny (on 20 October 1857) at Kahire as part of the Punjab Irregular Force. The nucleus of the regiment came from men who were transferred from the Guides and some from the Punjab levies. Thus every man who enlisted in this regiment was a labourer as well as a soldier and was not caught up with caste taboos. Many of the men were trained in a multiplicity of skills such as shoemaking, leather tanning, carpentry, and basket making, and that enhanced their value as they were engaged in numerous civil works such as bridge making, roads, and boring of tunnels.[120]

The men also performed well in active service. In 1860, the Pioneers were sent into action against the Mahsud Waziris, a tribe that occupied the hills between the north of the Gomal trade route, and performed admirably.[121] They were granted the India General Service Medal in 1869 with a clasp for the North West Frontier which also included all the small expeditions on the frontier which had taken place since 1849. The Muzbees had come to stay as an integral part of the Bengal army.[122]

The success story of the 23rd Pioneers continued. They were also part of the Miranzai expedition, where they moved through rugged mountainous country where roads were almost impassable. They proved their worth as soldiers, persevering cheerfully at clearing or constructing roads and paths.[123] In the expedition to Kelat-i-Gilzai they excelled, and General Roberts said, 'And there were no two words about the 23rd. They moved on unperturbed and undemanding'.[124] The Muzbee Pioneers saw

active service in China, Abyssinia, Afghanistan, and other countries and won many battle honours.[125]

Although the Muzbees did very well in active service, they did not make efficient officers as discussed in the earlier section. In 1865, the 23rd Pioneers could forward just one name for havildar, arguing that these men had not yet shaken off their years of backwardness. The Muzbees, however, were prepared to accept as an officer even a 'well born Sikh', whom the could respect.[126] The 32nd Pioneers, did not encounter the same problem, but the men were given to heavy drinking. Since other Sikhs groups also indulged in drinking this was not seen as a serious weakness. The Muzbees endeared themselves to their officers because of their alertness, intelligence and admirable group spirit. They were encouraged to develop their abilities by emulating the commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Since they belonged to the same caste and had no caste prejudices for or against anyone in the regiment, they carried out their duties commendably.[127]

The Muzbees then, in their performance, rated very differently from other low-caste groups, and were not mustered out of the army at a time when other low-caste groups were gradually being phased out. In fact, in 1887, the erstwhile 34th Bengal Infantry (Futtehgarh levy) which had earlier been disbanded, was re-raised as another Pioneer corps composed of Muzbees, Ramdasis and Lobanas. While other low castes had been enlisted as infantry soldiers, the Muzbees were given the additional tasks of Pioneers, which they fulfilled very satisfactorily.[128]

The Muzbee successes stood out in contrast to the lacklustre performance of other low-caste groups, and as early as March 1868, the experiment with men from other lower castes seemed to falter. C-in-C, Sir William Mansfield, reported to the government that these men did not have the makings of soldiers and that the composition of the native army be modified. He argued that men of certain classes such as the Bundelas, Ahirs, Pasis, Lodhs, Dhanuks, Kurmis, Chamars, and Mehtars be excluded from the ranks of the army. His sentiments were echoed in military circles as officers experienced various shortcomings and weaknesses in these groups. At the time, the government was not prepared to carry out any drastic amendments or sanction the total exclusion of Ahirs, Bundelas, Gujars, and

Mallees, and minor modification was permitted. A regiment could recruit others, when it was not feasible to fulfil the total authorized strength as per requirement.[129]

A uniform complaint amongst officers about lower-caste men was the lack of soldierly qualities because of their 'poor physique'. Hence in December 1878, when each regiment was to increase its strength by 200 men, the Commanding Officer of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry requested that he exclude the Chamar and Mehtar castes and substitute them with men from the Rajput, Brahmin, Dhanuk, Lodh, Ahir castes because the former did not conform to military requirements of proper height and good physique. The C-in-C agreed and the regiment was given permission to exclude these castes, but a recommendation was made that the number of Brahmins and Rajputs should not increase either.[130]

The physique is an important requirement in the making of a soldier and military policy had laid down certain regimental standards for each class, for height and chest measurements, while selecting a potential recruit.[131] Low-caste men came to be synonymous with poor physique, as seen in the 25th Punjab Infantry. The officers argued that although the regiment was in good order and carefully instructed, it did not compare with the other Punjab regiments because of the presence of low-caste men. However, it is clear that the regiment did not take care to recruit men who were 'martial' from among the low castes. Despite this lapse in recruitment policy, low-caste men were avoided and men with soldiers potential, i.e. men of higher castes, were sought after.[132]

Some officers also harboured a sense of prejudice against men of the lower castes. The 26th Punjab Infantry, composed of Afridis of humble origin, experienced the loss of a number of rifles. These men came from clans that bore a reputation for thieving. Thus when the rifles were declared missing, these troops were automatically held responsible.[133] Thereafter the recruiting officer in Peshwar was informed that he should enlist men of better castes from the trans-border area, rather than the Afridis, because their background did not allow them to become good soldiers.

Low-caste men, particularly the Mehtars,[134] were deemed to be unscrupulous, careless, untidy, and ill-disciplined. Their

integration into the military system was bogged down by the harsh military code of conduct. Outside of military life, it was felt, they were accustomed to an amorphous sense of discipline which made their entry into the military system a delicate affair. Measuring up to military demands and the military code of conduct was thus, it was thought, not a simple exercise for them, unlike their counterparts of higher castes whose values were oriented towards discipline and could thus accept military norms with ease.

Besides centuries and generations of subjugation and humiliation were not easily overcome and the low-caste recruit was often seen as lacking a military character, especially apparent when he was in a position of command or responsibility.[135]

The example of Jemadar Madaree of the 35th Bengal Native Infantry illustrates this. He was the only man of Mehtar caste to obtain a commissioned rank. His satisfactory performance as a pay havildar qualified him for a promotion. But once he was promoted to the commissioned ranks as a jamadar, he seemed to falter and his performance waned. His inferiority complex grew because he was conscious that he belonged to a caste of sweepers, and other native officers of superior castes sneered at his status. Thereafter, he was found unfit for the superior position, transferred on medical grounds, and later pensioned.[136] There were also similarities in the case of Subedar Parrumsooke of Chamar caste. He showed low performance levels on promotion and could not cope with caste complexes. He too was invalided out and moved to the Pension Establishment.

There were other regiments that faced similar problems with the officer cadre. Jemadar Arjun of the 6th Bengal Infantry in 1890, who was reported unfit for service on caste grounds.[137] In another instance, four Indian officers of low caste in the 33rd Bengal Infantry were given unfavourable reports. Such examples gave credence to the belief that low-caste men did not have the potential to become officers, and the Commanding Officer of the 33rd argued that the mere presence of a low-caste native officer was a 'defect'[130] in any regiment.

The stereotype of the low-caste man as an unsuccessful soldier was generally accepted in military circles by the 1880s. It had wider ramifications as it caused a sense of frustration among commanders who found that despite assistance and

encouragement, it was almost impossible to infuse in these men the high military spirit and honourable pride in their profession which was essential for each soldier, because of an inferiority complex.

Nevertheless, caught up in these contradictions, the army continued to overlook such weakness among other categories of low castes such as the Ahirs, Lodhs, Dhanuks, and Pasis, hoping that some improvement would take place in the years to come. They were thus given further opportunities to prove themselves. Accordingly, the 35th Bengal Native Infantry was to complete its strength from such caste groups that performed their duties as soldiers creditably. The army was not disappointed because the behaviour of these troops in the field and quarters was quite exemplary.[139] Clearly, even the authorities realized that it was unreasonable to draw a correlation between factors like physical characteristics and caste backgrounds.

Future Trends in the Structure of Low-caste Regiments

Time, patience, and sensitivity would have gone a long way in making the experiment with low-caste troops a success. However, since an army can rarely afford the luxury of the time, a General Order passed in 1882[140] ordered that most regiments with large proportions of low castes be either disbanded or reduced. The regiments affected were the 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, and 41st of the Bengal Native Infantry. Only two cavalry regiments, the 16th and the 17th Bengal Cavalry were scheduled for reduction. More significantly, in further correspondence on the subject the Adjutant General in India, in a letter to the Secretary, Government of India, on the recommendation of the C-in-C, suggested that in future the enlistment of low-caste men of the 'non-military races' be discontinued.[141]

The British disbanded these regiments thus discrediting the military abilities of low-caste men. In the consequent transfer and distribution of troops, the British continued to follow the principles of caste. In their attempt to avoid hurting the men's sentiments, they ascertained that they were affiliated to regiments whose caste composition was the same as, or almost similar to, theirs. Thus a company of Pasis, Dhanuks, and

Chamars was sent from the 34th Bengal Native Infantry to the 32nd Pioneers. The 32nd had an essentially Muzbee Sikh component, but also had a few men who were 'Hindus of inferior castes'. So the men transferred from the 34th to the 32nd were able to adapt well. Similarly a company from the 35th Bengal Native Infantry composed of 'Hindus of inferior castes' was sent to the 23rd Pioneers. The latter was also a low-caste regiment, with a predominant Muzbee and Ramdasi composition, while also having twenty-four Dhanuks in service. Again the 41st Bengal Native Infantry that was prepared for reduction sent one company of Jats to the 21st Bengal Native Infantry.[142] This attempt to avoid hurting caste sensibilities in the disbanding and transfer was somewhat contradictory: it created new pockets of lower-caste preponderance in place of the low-caste regiments that had been disbanded.

A turning point in military policy came on 20 January 1883, when General Order no. 9 and a subsequent government order laid down fresh guidelines for the caste constitution of the Bengal Army in supercession of all previous orders.[143]

One of the clauses with the most far-reaching consequences dealt with the low castes. The government accepted the prohibition of certain of the lowest and menial classes of Hindus from recruitment in the army, leaving it to the discretion of the commanding officer to enlist other castes, who were of an inferior, but not absolutely the lowest status.[144]

The enlistment of menial classes such as Khuttecks, Mehtars, Chamars, Dhanuks, Pasis, Lodhs, Gararias, Baniahs, Kaiths, Kurmis, Bhaths, and other castes inferior to the above were prohibited.[145] Gujars, Ahirs, Jats, and other classes of Hindustani Hindus not named could be enlisted under the head of 'other Hindus', provided they were fit for military service in all respects.[146] The Kayastha community was extremely offended on finding itself listed among the menial castes. The Kayastha Literary and National Association promptly complained to the government on its exclusion and decided to prove its Kshatriya ancestry.[147] The army acknowledged the error and agreed to expunge its name from the list of menial classes. But the army did not relent about enlistment, for it maintained that however honourable the social standing of Kayasthas, they were not a military class.[148]

It is interesting to note that General Order no. 9 of 1883 specified that nineteen regiments of the Bengal Infantry that earlier had one company each of 'other Hindus' would no longer recruit such men. Instead they were to be replaced by Jats, Bundelas, Rajputs, and Hillmen.[149] The commanding officers were required to use their discretion for distinguishing such castes from the 'menial classes' that were not to be enlisted. There were approximately 2018 men of inferior castes serving in these nineteen regiments, who could be replaced accordingly. They comprised about 1260 Ahirs, 186 Gujars, 96 Kurmis, 72 Pasis, 41 Bhats, and other castes like the Lohars, Chamars and Khattecks who were less than 40.[150]

Ahir recruitment was also debated. By early 1888, the approximate number of Ahirs in the Bengal Infantry was about 1260. They were generally referred to as the ordinary Hindustani Ahirs or herdsmen and enlisted from Oudh and the lower districts of the North Western Provinces. Earlier they had enjoyed a fairly good reputation as soldiers, but by this time there was a preference for Rajputs and Jats and the Ahir was excluded, as military opinion on the martial qualities of the Ahir had changed.[151]

In the 5th Bengal Infantry in 1889, 'unsatisfactory sepoy material' was removed and considerable progress made in substituting Rajputs and Jats for 'other Hindus'.[152] Furthermore, the 33rd, 38th, 39th, and 40th regiments of Bengal Infantry that had a substantial proportion of low-caste men were to undergo structural changes: The 33rd Bengal Infantry, henceforth the 33rd (Punjab) regiment of Bengal Infantry, was replaced by a regiment of Punjabi Muhammedans;[153] the 38th Bengal Infantry was to have Dogra volunteers from the Hindustani regiments, one Dogra company from the 1st Punjab Infantry and one from the 22nd Bengal Infantry;[154] the 39th Bengal Infantry was replaced by a regiment of Garhwalis;[155] and the 40th Bengal Infantry was composed entirely of transfrontier Pathans.[156]

Apart from the structural changes, certain other measures were implemented to encourage low caste men to seek their discharge. The revised scale of pensions and gratuities as laid down in para 2, G.G.O. no. 1110, on 19 December 1890 was to be offered to native officers, non-commissioned officers and sepoys of unauthorized classes then serving in the other

Hindustani regiments of the Bengal army. The vacancies thus created were to be filled up by selected sepoys from regiments that were being disbanded. These sepoys were allowed to volunteer for transfer to other regiments of the Bengal army. The C-in-C thought that this was a good opportunity to remove men of low caste still serving in some of the Hindustani regiments; as the proposal was not creative of any additional expense inasmuch that instead of getting rid of men of fighting classes then serving with the disbanded corps, a certain number would be transferred to the Hindustani regiments and a corresponding number of low caste men from these regiments would be discharged with the pensions and gratuities laid down in para of G.G.O. no. 1110 of 1890.[157]

Conclusion

In the army, pragmatism rather than liberal idealism was the cornerstone. In true pragmatic fashion the army authorities found it easier to go along with existing notions of who made a good soldier. They saw the higher-caste man as being worthier of soldierhood, because of his initiative, drive, and leadership. Belief was reinforced by the ease with which the higher-caste man could use his superior social position to command, control, and discipline those under him in the military. The lower-caste man, they argued, could not become a soldier because his background continued to stand in the way. They realized that the mere switch of clothing or barracks could not instil new character into the low-caste man. Although the army had wanted to rid itself of its dependence on Brahmins and Rajputs and had genuinely wanted to be engaged in the process of social change, it found it difficult to recruit men without confidence and initiative. Furthermore, it found it equally difficult to entrust these men with the command of troops of higher castes on account of their customary submissiveness to the authority of superior castes.

The army's confusion over its role as beneficent provider of efficient fighting force was reinforced by the unequal success that different caste groups had. The factors that led to the success of some groups vis-à-vis others were related both to the opportunities given to them and their utilization of these.

Thus the Muzbee Sikhs fared much better than the other low-caste groups because they were concentrated in a fewer regiments and an aura of achievement was built up around them. Most of the other low-caste groups could not completely break out of age-old grooves of subordination, and thus did not cope with military demands. The General Order of 1883 called for their exclusion. It was the men from the 'martial races and the fighting classes' who were given pre-eminence in recruitment policy. An aura of strength, courage, tenacity was built up around them. This attitude took a cyclical turn once again on the eve of the First World War, (1914–18) when recognition was given to the low castes and recruitments made from their ranks. In the years of peace that followed the low castes were pushed into the background once again, only to be remembered when the Second World War broke out.

Endnotes

1. T. A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822–1922*, London, 1974, p. 82. Also, according to Stephen Cohen, 'The Untouchable Soldier, Caste, Politics and the Indian Army', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, May 1969, p. 454, the British Indian Army did not use the term 'class' as an economic category. Both the terms, 'caste' and 'class' were used interchangeably and denoted various ethnic, racial, territorial, and even religious groups. I have also adopted the army usuage of the terms in referring to various social groups who were recruited. Also, the army had introduced 'caste returns' which were considered being important records. The regiments were required to furnish details of men of various castes that comprised the regiment as against the authorization.

2. Strachey, Sir John, *India*, Kegan Paul Trench and Co., London, 1888, p. 216.

3. T. A. Heathcote. *The Indian Army*, p. 81.

4. Roger Beaumont, *Sword of the Raj, The British Army in India, 1747–1947*, Bobbs Merrill Company, New York, 1977, p. 192.

5. Sir W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire, Its People, History and Products*, London, 1886, p. 470. The Punjab Frontier Force which, like the corps of Guides maintained a distinct character of its own, and was used for frontier service only, was raised in the pre-mutiny period. For administrative purposes it was placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor of the Punjab, but for operational purposes under the

Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) Bengal. It was also governed by the Native Articles of War and the Bengal Army regulations. In 1885, total transfer under the C-in-C took place, but the Force was not to be broken up or distributed in other commands, and subject to the exegencies of service, the duties were not to be interchangeable with Bengal regiments. Military Proceedings, September 1885, nos 572–600, (unpublished, available at the National Archives of India, Delhi).

6 Strachey, *India*, p. 61.

7 Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour, An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men*, London, 1974, p. 125.

8. Brig-Gene. John Jacob, *The Views and Opinions of the Indian Army*, Smith and Elder, London, 1858, pp. 118–19.

9. Sir Henry Lawrence, *Essays Military and Political Written in India*, London, 1859, pp. 24–5.

10. Jacob, *The Views and Opinions of the Indian Army*, pp. 112–13.

11. Hon'able J. P. Grant, President of the Council in India, Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Organization of the Indian Army, Peel Commission, Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, (hereafter PP, HofC), p. 53, also referred to as Peel Commission.

12. The Punjab Committee consisted of such eminent officers as Sir John Lawrence, Sir Henry Lawrence, Sir Neville Chamberlain.

13. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1862, no. 726. Also Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army and its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Berkley, 1971, revised OUP, 1990; KML Saxena, *The Military System of India, 1859–1900,* Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1974.

14. Military Proceedings, August 1872, no. 399, and G.O. no. 9 of 1864. Cavalry regiments were composed of Hindustani Muhammedans, Punjabi Muhammedans, Dogras and Hillmen, Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Brahmins, Hindustani Hindus, Trans-Indus Punjab and Border tribes, Bundelas, Pathans, Duranis, and Mooltanis. Infantry regiments had a wider social base and were composed of Gurkhas and other Hillmen, Ahirs, Pasis, Dhanucks, Lodhs, and other Hindus.

15. Military Proceedings, July 1875, no. 304. This regiment had Muhammedans, Dogras, Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Brahmins, and 'other castes'. As the regiment reached the proportion of its authorized quota, the CO found that men requested him for transfer to troops with men of their own caste. The Muslim section also wanted a Punjabi Muhammedan troop and a Hindustani Muhammedan troop.

16. Military Proceedings, Feb. 1882, no. 2101.

17. Ibid. This conversion was not encouraged by the Commander of Gwalior district, Brig-Gen. W. Gordon, but was sanctioned because the conversion had already begun. In fact the messing arrangements of the Sikh troop demonstrated how men of the same social group placed together were so content.

18. Military Proceedings, June 1885, nos 948–9. This was sanctioned and the vacancies caused by breaking up the Brahmin troop were filled by Rajputs.

19. The 7th Bengal Cavalry was composed chiefly of classes from the north-west. The Brahmins formed a large proportion of the population.

20. Military Proceedings, March 1887, no. 565. Earlier some of the Brahmins *sowars* had been charged with murder. So a ban was placed on the promotion of all Brahmins. Later when they were acquitted they continued to serve faithfully despite the ban on promotions which was finally lifted. The recommendation of the regiment was that Ressaidar Badrinath be promoted to 2nd class *ressaidar*, to take the rank below Ressaidar Hurji Ram, who as Woordie-Major had been drawing a higher rate of pay and who should be promoted as senior ressaidar.

21. Minute in the Military Dept., 1863–76, ch. 2, p. 639.

22. Maj. Gen. F. J. Goldsmid, 'Native Armies of India', *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. 6, July–Oct. 1888.

23. Military Proceedings, Sept. 1885, nos 987–90. Since the Muslims were outnumbered they did not care to enlist. Neither did this Muslim company serve as any counterpoise to the Sikhs. No official end-orsement was made but unofficially the COs stopped recruiting Muslims. Similarly the enlistment of Dogras for the 45th Bengal Native Infantry was discontinued and these were converted to Sikh regiments. Also General Order of the Governor General in Council (hereafter GOGG), no. 9 of 1883, (unpublished records, National Archives of India, Delhi).

24. Military Proceedings, June 1892, no. 1325–30, despatch no. 76. The Punjab Committee consisted of Sir John Lawrence, Brig. Chamberlain, and Lt. Col. B. Edwardes who were also members of the Army Commission for Reorganization in 1858.

25. Ibid. This measure would not effect the basic composition or numbers of the Hindustani portion., Earlier 'class' regiments consisted only of Sikhs or Gurkhas or Pathans, but as Lt. Gen. H. W. Norman cautioned it was not the best policy to have an army composed only of those groups.

26. Ibid. Lt. Gen. H. W. Norman.

27. GOGG; no. 314, 1893.

28. Military Proceedings, Jan. 1894, nos 2322–5. Forty-six men were on sick leave, 104 had either died, transferred to the reserve, or already been sent on pension or discharge.

29. Military Proceedings, April 1882, nos 1902–3.

30. Ibid. Brig. J. L. Nation, Commander, Eastern Frontier District.

31. Ibid.

32. Military Proceedings, April 1885, nos 235–7. Also April 1882, nos 1902–3.

33. Brig. J. L. Nation, Military Proceedings, April 1882, no. 1902.

34. Military Proceedings, April 1882, no. 674. Also Military Proceedings, Nov. 1883, nos 365–8. Also Military Proceedings, Feb. 1884, no. 838.

35. Military Proceedings, April 1882, no. 1902–3. The supply of atta to these regiments was problematic and did not seem worth the while.

36. Military Proceedings, July 1882, no. 1351 and GOGG, no. 210 of June 1882.

37. Military Proceedings, July 1882, nos 1353–5.

38. Ibid. This was not entirely successful as pointed out in earlier pages with reference to class regiments.

39. Military Proceedings, July 1882, nos 1357–9.

40. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1882, no. 1684.

41. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1882, nos 1685–7. Permission was granted to transfer to any Hindustani regiment stationed on the line of the railways.

42. Military Proceedings, Aug. 1882, no. 2322. Also no. 2317. The CO of the 4th Punjab Cavalry felt that the men should be allowed to volunteer, not just to the Punjab Cavalry but also to the Bengal Cavalry.

43. Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol I, no. 23.

44. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1862, no. 729.

45. Military Proceedings, Aug. 1872, no. 400. Also July 1872, nos 698–704.

46. Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol. 1, nos 22–3. Also in Secretary of State despatch no. 107 of 1863.

47. Ibid.

48. Military Proceedings, August 1872, nos 395 and 397. The 16th Bengal Cavalry had only two Jat officers. One of them was intelligent but unpopular, the other was untrustworthy.

49. Ibid. According to orders the Jat component of the cavalry was to be 8½ troops, but it was difficult to reach that. The Infantry was to have 15 coys of Jats.

50. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1862, no. 723.

51. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1889, no. 714.

52. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1889, nos 714–15.

53. Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol. 1, no. 23.

54. Military Proceedings, May 1786, vol. 1, no. 22.

55. Military Proceedings, Dec. 1862, nos 244–5.

56. Military Proceedings, July 1874, nos 145–8. The rules had been laid down on 31 Jan. 1873, that the CO could select the officer but it had to be ratified by the C-in-C and govt. appointments of native gentlemen were to be made keeping in mind the interests of the regiment and that senior non commissioned officers would not be treated unjustly.

57. Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons (hereafter PP, HOC) c 2515v5, 1858, Appendix I, p. 180.

58. GOGG, no. 291, 8 April 1893.

59. Military Proceedings, Oct. 1873, nos 71–2, General Sir Charles Napier, C-in-C, 1870–6 made this recommendation.

60. Military Proceedings, Oct. 1873, nos 71–2, Memorandum from Adjutant General to COs of regiments of cavalry, infantry, and sappers.

61. Military Proceedings, Sept. 1870, nos 537–8.

62. The trans-Sutlej men broadly referred to Jat Sikh, Punjabi Muhemmedans, and a few border tribes. The Jat Sikh troops which formed the main component of this category, that is, the trans-Sutlej area, which was across the river Sutlej towards the north, were generally from the *Sindhu, Gil, Randhawa, Dhillon* and other clans. *The Handbook for the Indian Army, the Sikhs*, Maj. A. E. Barstow, GoI, Central Publications Branch, Calcutta, 1928, is an interesting source of information on Sikh troops.

63. Military Proceedings, July 1876, nos 213–14.

64. Military Proceedings, July 1876, nos 215.

65. Military Proceedings, Aug. 1876, nos 241–2.

66. Military Proceedings, Oct. 1881, nos 1939–40.

67. Military Proceedings, Oct. 1881, no. 1940.

68. Ibid.

69. Military Proceedings, July 1876, nos 80–6. In 1871, over 2004 cases of lameness were admitted into hospitals. Also Military Proceedings, April 1873, no. 46.

70. Military Proceedings, Sept. 1882, no. 2579.

71. Military Proceedings, June 1879, no. 100. Later on regiments began to make use of socks. Fro example, the 35th wore socks and the 45th used bandages. Also, in the 19th Bengal Lancers the men were provided with long riding boots and at foot parades they wore native shoes, sometimes with socks. Also Medical and Sanitary Report, 1872, pp. 180 and 185. Also Military Proceedings, of July 1876, no. 85 and March 1877, nos 296–301.

72. Military Proceedings, July 1876, no. 85. Committee assembled on 25 Jan. 1875, comprising President Brig. Gen. Sir C. H. Brownlow KCB. Members were Col H. T. Macpherson, and CO 2nd Gurkha Regiment; Lt Col J. T. Harris CO 33 NI; Lt Col G. A. Williams, 32 NI.

73. Ibid.

74. Some soldiers often purchased a second hand pair from European troops at the station where they were located prior to the Europeans moving out, and seemed quite satisfied with them.

75. In June 1872, Lord Napier of Magdala C-in-C recommended that the harness and sadlery manufactory at Kanpur be utilized to supply boots and shoes of a superior quality those available elsewhere in India for use of the army. Both British and native troops, it was felt, would benefit from this shoe factory, because British soldiers would prefer a lighter boot of the ammunition pattern to those recieved from England.

76. Military Proceedings, Dec. 1892, nos 2782–5. Also Military Proceedings, July 1883, nos 1101–2. Also Military Proceedings, Dec. 1872, pt 1, no. 52. Farriers or *salootries* (Indian name for farriers) were to be enlisted as fighting men at the same rates of pay and pension as the sowar.

77. Military Proceedings, Sept. 1874, no. 41.

78. Military Proceedings, Sept. 1874, nos 41–5.

79. Military Proceedings, Dec. 1880, nos 334–5.

80. Military Proceedings, May 1874, no. 76.

81. Capt. A. H. Bingley, *Handbooks for the Indian Army, Brahmans*, Simla, 1897, p. 42.

82. Ibid., p. 15.

83. Ibid., p. 48. Also the scale laid down for short and long voyages would be found in Army Regulations, India, vol. 5, Commissariat, app. 2.

84. Lt Col W. B. Cunningham, *Handbooks for the Indian Army, Dogras*, Calcutta, 1932, p. 91.

85. Bingley, *Brahmans*, p. 43.

86. Babu Rajendra Mitra, 'Spirituous Drinks in Ancient India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. XXXXII, pt. 2, 1873. Sages and moralists have always expatiated in strong terms on the impropriety of indulgence in spirituous drinks. Prohibition was first mentioned by Sukracharya, priest of the *asuras*. According to Manu, the soldier and the merchant should not deal in spirituous liquor leaving the Sudra to follow the trade. Brahmins were to abstain from all kinds of spirituous drinks, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas from *arrack* or *paishiti*, and Sudras could have anything they liked.

87. Bingley, *Brahmans*, p. 44.

88. Cunningham, *Dogras*, p. 91.

89. Capt. J. Evatt, *Handbooks for the Indian Army, Garhwalis*, Calcutta, 1924, p. 40.

90. Ibid. During World War I a shortage of *langris* frequently necessitated detailing of soldiers for duty as cooks and though the system was one of company messes containing a complete mixture of castes, no difficulties arose. The assumption of the sacred thread entailed a stricter observance of caste rules and it would therefore seem that if a man did not take the *janeo* he would be free from obligations. In spite of that the janeo did not stand in the way of military obligations.

91. Lt Col Eden Vansittart, *Handbooks for the Indian Army, Gurkhas*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 57. They did not eat cow, *nilgai* or the female goat. The Gurung ate buffalo meat in his own village, but was quite reticent about it.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid., p. 58.

94. Gen. George. MacMunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers*, London, 1934, p. 545.

95. Military Proceedings, May 1882, nos 776–7.

96. W. C. Rawlinson, *History of the 3rd Bn. 7th Raujput Regiment*, London, 1941, p. 108. He says that the Rajput soldier was not encumbered by caste prejudices like other sepoys. To illustrate this, he

cites the instance of the expedition to Mesopotamia, 1883, when a dire shortage of meat occured. Subedar Major Gurdatt Singh of this regiment ate a demonstration meal of horse flesh because mutton was not available. However, his example was not widely followed by the men for fear of social ostracism.

97. Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 55.

98. Ibid., p. 56.

99. PP, HoC, Sir Patrick Grant, among others, took a neutral stand, Col. Mayhem, Lt. Gen. Sir George Pollock, Sir Hugh Rose, among others, clearly supported low-caste recruitment. Sir John Lawrence, Brig-Gen. Chamberlain, Lt. Col. Edwardes, Gen. Sir William Mansfield were wary of low-caste entry into the army.

100. A Bopegamage, 'Caste, Class and the Indian Army, A Study of the origins of Indian Army Personnel', in Jacques Von Doorn (ed.), *Military Professions and Military Regimes*, Netherlands, 1969, pp. 130–1.

101. Sir Hope Grant Reorganization of the Indian Army, Papers Supplementary to the Report of the Army Commission, c 2541, House of Commons, 1859, pp. 177–83. Also Col Bruce of the Oudh Police in 1860, citing Col. James Skinner, said that lower castes should have been extensively employed in the ranks as that could have precluded the events of 1857. Prior to the period of the Marquis of Wellesley, the Indian people were not against the administration and there were a number of low castes in the ranks. In 1857, the Bombay and Madras armies were composed of all races including low castes but both the presidencies were not hostile to Bengal.

102. Stephen Cohen, 'Caste, Untouchability and Politics in the Indian Army', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, May 1969, p. 455.

103. Bopegamage, 'Caste, Class and the Indian Army, pp. 130–5.

104. Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry, Its Organization and Discipline, 1796–1852*, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 123–4.

105. Military Department, Consultations, Oct. 1860, bundle nos 1479–94, Proc. A, nos 457–62.

106. M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*, Bombay, reprint, 1985, p. 19.

107. M. N. Srinivas, 'Mobility in the Caste System', *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization, and other Essays*, Delhi, 1989, p. 41.

108. Ibid., pp. 56–67. M. N. Srinivas, referred to this cultural process as 'Sanskritization' which may briefly be defined as the process

by which a low-caste tribe of any other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology, style of life in particular, of the 'twice born' *dvija* caste. The Sanskritization of a group helps in improving its position in the local caste hierarchy because it presupposes an improvement in the economic or political position of the group. It has been in operation ever since the Vedic Aryans established themselves.

109. Cohen, 'Caste, Untouchability and Politics in the Indian Army', p. 453.

110. Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol. I, no. 23. A precis of reports by the officers commanding these levies was submitted. Of these officers, Maj. Gen. Bradford and Lt Col Bruce alone expressed total approval. Others had some reservations.

111. Military Proceedings, Oct. 1860, no. 562. COs were advised to admit the fittest men possible. Also, in respect of low castes, in order to avoid a sense of inferiority and harassment, it was advised that they be placed in separate regiments. Also Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol. I, no. 23.

112. In a way the use of the term 'low caste' and 'Hindoos of inferior castes' tends to be confusing. The term 'low caste' was applied to the shudra castes within the theoretical varna model of classifying Indian society; that is those who did not belong to the *dvija*, who were the twice born, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas. The shudra/low castes were mainly the artisan castes and were not below the purity pollution barrier and thus remained within the varna system. However, in reality, the social hierarchy in Indian society was determined by the Jati model which accepted numerous castes and subcastes as a feature of Indian society and operated at the local level, as against the varna model which applied to the whole country. The low and inferior castes within this model were outside the ambit of the purity pollution barrier and were those social groups who performed the most menial and demeaning tasks e.g. the untouchables are not part of the varna model but are part of the jati model.

In a broad sense the classification of 'low caste' in the British Indian army applied to those who did not belong to the '*dvija*', but remained within the ambit of the varna system. For recruiting purposes the term 'low caste' was applied to the *Pasis, Ahirs, Dhanuks, Lodhs, Mehtars, Chamars, Gujars, Muzbeez, Ramdasees* and some others. The classification of 'Hindoos of inferior castes' applied to social groups such as the *Bhungees, Khutteeks Gorereahs, Naos, Orlis, Menas, Korees, Koomars, Kayuths, Bhals, Durjees, Goosains, Bairagee, Malees, Kulwars, Morar, Goojurs, Kunjur, Kuhar, Dhanuk, Jats Chumars,*

Tamooles, Naees, Mooraees, Kachees, and any other habitually employed in menial occupations. (In some cases there is an overlap.)

The General Order of 9 Sept. 1864 recommended the appro-priate composition for each regiment of cavalry and infantry, and also proposed the recruitment of 'low castes' as well as 'Hindoos of inferior castes' for certain infantry regiments. In the format of the Caste Returns dated August 1871 for the Bengal Native Infantry, the classifications of the 'caste' groups were: *Brahmins and Rajpoots; Hindoostanee Mussulmen; Jats; Goorkhas and Hill-men; Bundelas; Aheers; Passees; Loodhs; Dhanooks; Koormees; Goojurs; Chamars; Mehtars; Hindoos of inferior castes; Punjabee Mussulmen; Trans-Indus and Border Tribes; Dogras and Hill-men; Sikhs, Trans-Sutlej; Sikhs, Cis-Sutlej; All races and castes; total number of unauthorized men.* Shown by the caste return.

113. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1862, no. 726. They were formed into the 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Regiments of Bengal Native Infantry. The Agra levy was absorbed into the 38th Bengal Native Infantry, the Allahabad Levy into the 33rd, the Bareilly levy into the 36th, the Futtehgarh levy into the 34th, the Meerut levy into the 39th, the Mynpoorie levy into the 35th, the Shahjehanpore levy into the 40th. Also Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol. I, no. 23.

114. MacMunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers*, pp. 13–14 and pp. 545–8. Hereafter, George Macmunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers.*

115. Lt Col H. R. Brander, *32nd, Sikh Pioneers, Regimental History*, Calcutta, 1906, vol. 1, p. 2.

116. Ibid., p. 4.

117. Ibid., p. 5. Also GOGG, no. 400 of 3 May 1861.

118. Ibid., p. 7. Also GOGG, no. 918, 9 Oct. 1877. In 1867 their uniform was changed from drab to red and was highly appreciated. Their regimental motto was 'aut viam aut faciam' meaning, 'what must be, must be' (*Muzbee, Muzbee, Jo hoyega, hoyega.*)

119. Capt. H. N. Pirouet, *A Short History of the 23rd Sikh Pioneers*, London, 1927, p. 12. In 1861 it was called the 23rd regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry and in 1864 the 23rd Punjab regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry (Pioneers).

120. Macmunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers*, p. 262.

121. Brandes, *32nd Sikh Pioneers*, p. 195.

122. Macmunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers*, p. 141.

123. Ibid., p. 207.

124. Ibid., pp. 244–5.

125. These regiments were disbanded on 8 Dec. 1932, after many years of loyal service and honourable traditions.

126. Military Proceedings, March 1865, no. 653. Major Chamberlain suggested that the 20 year-old Attar Singh, grandson of Hari Singh, the man who took Peshawar from the Afghans and an Atlhan Singh, a twenty five year old son of jagirdar Unwant Singh and other Sikh men of influential families, who were likely to bring a good amount of moral influence, intelligence and spirit into the regiment, could be recommended for officer cadre.

127. Military Proceedings, March 1865, nos 653 and 657.

128. MacMunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers*, p. 276. For a very long time the Pioneer in the army were Muzbee Sikhs only, despite proposals that other classes also be trained as Pioneers such as the purbiyas or mixed groups of men from the Punjab. Also Military Proceedings, June 1878, nos 251–2.

129. Military Proceedings, May 1876, vol. I, no. 23. The letter from government was addressed confidentially to the COs in Adjutant General Circular dated 26 May 1868.

130. Military Proceedings, March 1879, nos 121–3.

131. GOGG, 1875, no. 890, p. 190. Also Army Regulations, India, vol. II, paras 2199 and 2200.

132. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1892, no. 927.

133. Ibid.

134. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1878, no. 1051.

135. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1878, nos 1051–2.

136. Ibid., The CO of the 35th Bengal Native Infantry wanted to introduce Sikhs into the regiment because of their martial reputation instead of having a company of the sweeper caste.

137. Military Proceedings, Dec. 1891, no. 260.

138. Military Proceedings, April 1888, no. 268.

139. Military Proceedings, Nov. 1878, no. 1052.

140. GOGG, no. 210 of 1882.

141. Military Proceedings, July 1882, no. 1355; Nov. 1882, nos 1741–2; and Oct. 1885, no. 1751.

142. Military Proceedings, July 1882, no. 1356.

143. Military Proceedings, March 1883, nos 377–8.

144. Military Proceedings, Aug. 1883, no. 2011.

145. Military Proceedings, March 1883, no. 377.

146. Ibiḍ.

147. Military Proceedings, Jan. 1884, nos 2282–5.

148. Ibid.

149. Military Proceedings, Feb. 1888, no. 2155. The one company of 'Other Hindus' of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 11th Bengal Infantry was replaced by Rajputs; 2 companies of the 6th, 7th and 16th Bengal Infantry by one each of Rajputs and Jats; 9th Bengal Infantry by Rajputs; 10th Bengal Infantry by 3 companies of Jats; 13th Bengal Infantry by Jats and Rajputs; 3 companies of 18th Bengal Infantry by Rajputs and Hillmen; 33rd Bengal Infantry by 2 companies of Jats; 38th Bengal Infantry to get 2 companies of Rajputs; 39th Bengal Infantry was to get 2 companies of Hindustani Muhammedans; 40th Bengal Infantry to get 4 companies of Jats and Hindustani Muhammedans. Also, after 1885 the term 'Native' was dropped from the title of regiments. Also Military Proceedings, May 1888, no. 1655.

150. Ibid.

151. Military Proceedings, Feb. 1888, nos 2156–7, and Military Proceedings, April 1890, no. 817. There were a few exceptions as that of Judhistar Singh of a cavalry regiment who was to be commissioned. His originated from the Ahir cultivators of Rewari. They used the patronymic Singh, instead of Ram of the Hindustani Ahir, which indicated further their Rajput or Sikh association. Also Military Proceedings, May 1888, nos 1655–7.

152. Military Proceedings, Dec. 1890, no. 773.

153. As per the caste returns of 1871 and 1881, the composition was formerly of Brahmins and Rajputs, Hindustani Muhammedans, Ahirs, Pasis, Chamars, Hindus of inferior castes, and men of all races and castes. The regiment was re-raised at Jhelum with volunteers from the 21st, 24th and 28th regiments of Bengal Infantry. They would have cis/Punjabi Muhammedans.

154. Caste returns of 1871 and 1881 show the former composition as Brahmins and Rajputs, Jats, Ahirs, Kurmis and all races and castes. The 38th was later designated as the 38th (Dogra) regiment of Bengal Infantry.

155. Caste returns of 1871 and 1881 show the former composition as Brahmins and Rajputs, Jats, Gurkhas and Hillmen, Ahirs, Chamars, Mehtars, Hindus of inferior castes, Sikhs cis-Sutlej, and all races and castes. They had six companies of Garhwalis. Formerly the majority was Gurkha. Some Hillmen were also recruited. They were stationed at Kaludanda and designated as the 39th (Garhwal) regiment of Bengal Infantry.

156. Military Proceedings, Jan. 1892, nos 1401–7. Also June 1892, nos 1325 and 1330. Questions were asked as to why Baluchis were not keen on joining. The CO of the 40th Native Infantry reported that he met chiefs of the Brahui, Magzal tribes, and Baluch Sardars. They laid down terms and conditions stipulating appointment of their own officers. The CO did not wish to comply for it would be difficult to discipline them thereafter. Earlier the composition was Rajputs, Ahirs, Hindus of inferior castes, Sikhs trans-Sutlej, all races and castes. Mustered out at Kanpur and raised at Quetta.

157. Military Proceedings, Jan. 1891, no. 970.

6

Military Reform in the Aftermath of the Great War: Intentions and Compulsions of British Military Policy 1919–25[1]

Anirudh Deshpande

Introduction

At the end of the nineteenth century the Indian armed forces were organized in accordance with the principles and recommendations of the Peel and Eden Commissions.[2] The naval forces of colonial India after 1863 comprised the Royal Indian Marine (RIM). This was essentially a survey cum transport service maintained on policy guidelines laid down after the Mutiny of 1857. The RIM, quite different from the Bombay Marine of the East India Company, was subordinated to the army by the Marine Service Acts of the late nineteenth century.[3]

Between 1895 and 1914, under the lasting influence of the Army Organization Commission of 1879 assembled by Lord Lytton to suggest a reorganization of the Indian Army on the basis of the unsavoury experiences of the Second Afghan War (1878–80), some departments of the Indian army were reorganized and the separate presidency armies were abolished. Reform, based on the Eden Commission recommendations, highlighted the 'endeavour...to carry out the principles of segregation' by separating the Punjabis and Hindustanis in units

and prohibiting the enlistment of lower caste Hindus. The presidency armies were ostensibly abolished to develop efficiency and loyalty in the Indian Army. The danger of the unwieldy Bengal Army 'becoming homogeneous' due to its 'fusion into one huge body of soldiers' was cited as a reason for the reforms of 1895.[4] But in the event these reforms did not result in great efficiency.

For instance the Sub-Committee on the Military Requirements of the Empire, chaired by Morley and having Lord Esher among its members, noticed the high rate of wastage in men and animals during the Tirah operations of 1897–8 from wounds and illness. The Tirah Operations, which had displayed the manifold vulnerability of the Army in India on the Frontier, were described as a defeat before the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1907 by senior Indian Army officers.[5] The Tirah Frontier failure of 1897–8 exposed several deficiencies of the army organization in India and in 1911 Lord Hardinge thought of 'pruning' the Native Army of its useless branches and 'hopeless duffers' in the higher commissioned ranks. In fact the Viceroy asked the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) not to promote these 'duffers' and wherever possible retire them on pensions. Drawing Morley's attention to the slowness of promotion in the Indian Army he mentioned how the climate of India and long service made most officers 'quite unfit' to take command of their regiments. In Hardinge's view, which was later vindicated, a younger class of colonels was needed to secure efficiency in the Native (read Indian) Army.[6] The growing criticism of the Army in India led to the appointment of an Army in India Committee under the presidency of Field Marshal Lord Nicholson in 1912. This body was supposed to recommend changes in the constitution of the Indian military establishment in the context of contemporary Indian military obligations. However, the Great War prevented the implementation of the Nicholson Committee recommendations and postponed military reform in India.[7]

The Great War and the Russian revolution of 1917 brought geopolitical changes near India and revived the old Russophobia of the British empire. Soon after the armistice the Government of India spoke of the 'formidable menace of Bolshevik ideas' threatening India and Lord Chelmsford extended full support to Afghanistan against Bolshevism in 1918. Nonetheless

exaggerated British fears provoked the Third Afghan War in the summer of 1919. While the border was disturbed mass nationalism began to pose a serious challenge to colonial authority in India. The Indian demand for colonial reform and the fulfilment of British wartime promises was rising. It was also important to involve the armed forces in political reforms with an eye to the gradual development of self-government in India. During the Great War the Indian Army's organization and administration came under severe strain and criticism. The indictment of the Indian Army by the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission prompted the Secretary of State Montagu to send a reform-related despatch to the Government of India dated 10 August 1917. During the Afghan War of 1919 'allegations of incompetency in medical and transport arrangements' were levelled against the Government of India and this remained unmitigated by the fact that in 1919 the Government of India was generally 'passing through a period of great difficulty and acrid criticism'.[8] The experience of the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia had been wretched. The Force 'D', for instance, suffered the 'crime of non-provision of transport' and a beriberi epidemic. Matters were made worse and operations jeopardized due to the 'appalling sick rate from debility and scurvy'. In fact 'acid criticisms' of the Army medical services had been made as early as 1915 without effect and ultimately predictions that during prolonged deployment the troops would suffer from cholera, typhus, and paratyphoid came true.[9]

After the Third Afghan War the Government of India made it clear that for some time large forces would be kept on the Frontier. It was also stated that 'money in unprecedented quantities' would be spent on the improvement of Frontier roads and railways to help future military operations. But first this money had to be found and the Indian Army modernized to execute the new Frontier policy. In the meantime public criticism of the Indian Army had assumed alarming proportions. As a prelude to the setting up of the Army in India Committee under Lord Esher, the Press drew public attention to another 'Mesopotamian muddle' ostensibly perpetrated by the Army HQs on the Frontier. Consequently the Government of India was forced to admit after the Afghan War that Press coverage of the badly planned Afghan Campaign had 'very seriously

affected the reputation of the Indian Government both in Great Britain and in India'.[10] The recommendations of the Mesopotamia Commission had raised questions of 'great complexity and magnitude' and the British government wanted to investigate matters related to the Indian Army before reform in India was seriously contemplated. The great impact of the Mesopotamia Commission's Report on British policy can be gauged by the fact that in 1918 the War Office was even thinking of assuming direct administrative control over the Indian Army.[11] In short the Indian experience of the Great War, the 'Mesopotamian muddle' and criticism of the Indian Army during the Afghan Campaign of 1919 together caused the creation of the Army in India Committee of 1919. The first section of this chapter examines its report. The second analyses the reaction of the Government of India to the report, the third scrutinizes the retrenchment which reduced reform to an academic matter in the 1920s and the fourth concludes the paper.

The Accent of Reform

The Esher Committee (EC) considered the financial and political conditions prevalent in India in 1919 before submitting its report.[12] In tune with the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms its suggestions kept in mind the proposed but still largely theoretical evolution of India towards Dominion Status. Since the armed forces were to be the ultimate guarantors of any reform scheme in India the EC primarily recommended improvements in the internal military administration of India to make the armed forces contented:

> We are impressed by the necessity of maintaining this instrument, placed as it always must and should be in the hands of the civil power, in the highest state of efficiency. Whatever form the future Government of India may take, however it may be democratised, and whatever advance may be made on the part of the various sections of the Indian community towards national and imperial unity, the army cannot fail to remain a vital attribute of government in the hands of the dominant authority.[13]

The EC wanted the Indian authorities to establish a system which would be simple, economical, and 'adaptable, without

undue friction and disturbance' in conditions imposed by a World War because the obvious shortcomings of the Indian military organization had surfaced during 1914–18.[14] Simultaneously domestic pressures were influencing British policy in India. Reforms were necessary because new political factors such as the rising labour question and trade unionism in India were threatening production in government factories and 'indeed, all sources of production'.[15] Since the nineteenth century new military standards had evolved in Europe and the Great War underlined the importance of making countries militarily self-sufficient. Men's eyes had 'opened to the vastness of the requirement of modern warfare, to the necessity of organising the Empire's resources in peace time in such a way as to be capable, on the outbreak of war, of expansion with a rapidity and to an extent never contemplated before'.[16] To fight a future war India needed modern transport and communications, a professional military establishment, and above all industrial development. But all this had to be achieved under British hegemony which was dependent upon continued loyalty in the Indian armed forces and happiness of the British regiments stationed in India. In pursuit of this the EC was 'convinced of the necessity of raising the standard of living for British and Indian soldiers of all ranks' because the 'spirit of both' was 'to be maintained at the high level which the interests of the Indian Empire' demanded.[17]

Since political unrest in India was growing, to counter it effectively the military had to develop closer liaison with civilian authority. Reports had made it clear that despite the regimental tradition Indian soldiers could be influenced by hostile propaganda. Their experiences in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Persia, 'where movements and influences hostile to the British Government in India' were at work, called for alertness in military and civil intelligence about potential mutinies. Hence to preclude rebellion it was necessary to quickly inform civil authorities about 'an unhealthy spirit among the troops'.[18] The EC took a serious view of several 'seditious and revolutionary movements in India' which were undermining the fidelity of Indian troops. In this connection it was satisfactorily noted that copies of Fortnightly Reports prepared by the civil administration of each province were being regularly forwarded to army

authorities at HQ, command, division, and sometimes even brigade levels.[19]

At the end of the War discontent was rampant in the British and Indian armies. Service conditions in the British Army, which withdrew into 'self-conscious isolation' after the War, became exceedingly unattractive between the Wars. Peace training routine and regimental life with the accent on turn out, drill, and polish came back after the War which was widely perceived as an abnormal event in any case. Conditions of promotion improved late and far-reaching proposals were announced only after the purge of the Army Council under Hore-Belisha in 1937 and the Willingdon Committee's examination of the issue in 1939. The 1920s were marked by a shortage of young men from the gentry to fill the 650 commissions offered each year due to the poor public image of the army. Before 1914 an average of 80 university graduates were commissioned each year but by 1924 this figure had fallen to 12.[20]

In India, as the ECR observed, discontent was no doubt caused 'in great part due to the war and its aftermath, such as frequent transfers, the prevalence of high prices, and the fluctuations in the exchange value of the rupee, and also to changes in the political organization in India'.[21] Service grievances within the officer corps were serious and had to 'be removed at once'. There were discrepancies in pay between the Indian and British armies. Red tape had lengthened during the War and delays were occurring in giving the men their 'just dues'. Nothing less than a 'complete revision' and simplification of procedures was needed to restore confidence amongst troops. Service conditions in India were nineteenth century, the state of accommodation and hospitals left much to be desired and rank and file grumbling about these was 'legitimate'.[22] Officers of the Indian Army generally believed that their service was inferior to the British Army and quite obviously technologically less efficient. Furthermore the problems faced by the Indian Army in Mesopotamia and Palestine attached a 'stigma' to army administration in India and justified this widely prevalent opinion. Discrimination faced by British officers of the Indian Army competing with others in the European theatre was real.[23] Another reason for officer discontent was also that all important proposals were sent by the Government of India to the Secretary of State in Council for

approval and this caused needless delay. Military authorities in India, for their part, adopted 'an attitude of undue reticence' towards service conditions.[24] The Indian Army had become so unattractive that there was open reluctance on part of good Sandhurst cadets, supported by their parents, to elect for it. More alarmingly such tendencies were 'particularly noticeable in the case of those families' which had 'a long and honourable connection with the Indian Army'.[25] Therefore improvements in accomodation, health care, travel, pay, and allowances were deemed necessary for British officers of the Indian Army.

A 'conspicuous difference' existed between service conditions of British officers and British NCOs and their families. Crowded, ill-ventilated troop decks in troopships were often situated below the water line. Family quarters were cramped, afforded little privacy, militated against the 'spirit of the times', and exposed Englishwomen to Indians. This lowered imperial prestige significantly.[26] In the tropical climate of India several improvements were necessary to make Indian barracks approximate to acceptable British standards. Soldiers, who could no longer be treated as servants, demanded proper lighting, space, libraries, and spacious bathrooms. The accentuation of class differences between Britons had to be discouraged and improvements in barracks could not be 'postponed without the risk of undesirable consequences'.[27] Married soldiers were really hard-pressed because their families lived in 'conditions not differing much, except in the matter of fresh air, from slum lodgings in London'.[28] But in England a system of making military service socially tolerable had already been inaugurated in Aldershot and the King had written to General Henry S. Rawlinson [C-in-C] about this:

> I have been struck by the advance made in providing for the recreation and advancement of the troops. The Queen and I were especially pleased to find that steps are being taken to include the married families in these schemes. The provision of clubs for the married women and playgrounds for the children is a new and admirable development.[29]

It was noted with some accuracy and concern that in the absence of recreational facilities many younger soldiers were falling prey to external sources of amusement. This endangered the myth of self-sufficiency cultivated by regimental life. Hence

to reassert ideological control, the demand of soldiers for clubs like the officers' gymkhanas could not be overlooked. Furthermore the development of sport and cinemas attached to clubs and dancing rooms was culturally significant for European socializing:

> We wish, in conclusion, to point out that the outlook of the present day soldiers upon life is widely different from that of their predecessors of the old army. They have neither their deep seated discipline nor their long-suffering patience. They and their wives look for a higher level of comfort and a somewhat different class of recreation. Their reasonable aspirations must be met, and their idiosyncracies must be sympathetically studied, if they are to be a contented army while serving in India.[30]

The British Army was a counterpoise against civil and military unrest in India and had to be satisfied irrespective of costs involved. However, as the ECR noted with concern, the Great War had deeply influenced Indian soldiers and their experiences in Europe had affected their views on a number of important social and cultural issues. Soon after the War, with dim promotion prospects, they began to feel the pinch of rising prices. During the War, with many nationalist leaders urging Indians to volunteer, military service had assumed much wider significance which was reflected in the tremendous expansion of the army during 1914–18. Simultaneously, due to government promises, expectations had risen in the ranks and Indian officers had started comparing themselves unfavourably with their fellows in the civil service and the police. Therefore an increase in pay for Indian officers, i.e. VCOs, on conditions of efficiency and the discretion of their commanding officers, criteria not applied to British personnel, was urged. The NCOs incurred heavy expenses on new outfits to the tune of Rs 250 in the infantry and 400 in the cavalry on promotion to jamadar rank whereas their pay was only Rs 60 and 70 respectively. This often led to indebtedness to moneylenders, at the cost of *izzat*, for years.[31] The Government of India was asked to subsidize these officers whose pensions were also to be calculated as a certain proportion of their pay.[32]

Even badges of rank expressed racial discrimination and caused discontent amongst Indians. In 1920 it was impossible to distinguish Indian officers holding the King's Commission (KC), who were therefore entitled to salutes from British as

well as Indian soldiers, and similar British officers . It was also difficult to recognize an Indian Company officer entitled to salutes only from Indian soldiers. Uniform badges, with parity between Indian and British KCOs, were desirable if racial friction in the day-to-day functioning of the army was to be avoided. Up to 1919 Indian officers were disallowed soldier servants *by regulation*. Obviously such archaic rules that had been laid down to initially preserve British exclusivity in the services had to be modified. To lessen resentment servants had to be permitted for status-conscious upper class Indian KCOs and regulations needed standardization.[33] Status consciousness amongst Indians of all ranks was growing and this was reflected in the VCOs' desire to educate their sons. An insidious movement of upward mobility was to be witnessed in such contemporary demands. Indian VCOs, who came from villages, openly criticized the elitist bias in colonial education which was engineered to produce Indian KCOs:

> Our investigations have left us in no doubt that the education of their sons is a matter which is greatly troubling the minds of all Indian officers today. They see the sons of wealthy zamindars and others reaping the advantages of an education which costs more than they can afford, and which enables the former to go up for Sandhurst and a King's Commission, or to compete for the many good civil appointments now open to Indians. They represent with much force that, as Indians are now admitted to positions in the army which were not open to themselves, they have a right to expect that Government will not overlook their services and will make it possible for their sons to enter where the doors are shut to them.[34]

These demands had to be taken seriously because the progeny of these 'gentlemen' were perceived as good recruiting material for the future. It would be 'to the benefit of their country if the sons of these brave and loyal gentlemen' were 'given opportunities to fit themselves to compete on something approaching equal terms with the sons of the more wealthy classes'.[35] However, this was easier said than done in the two decades following the Great War. In the inter-War period the military finances of the Raj continued to deteriorate and this situation was further complicated by the cultural stereotypes guiding military policy in general in India. The lighting of barracks, and the British attitude towards it, make for a good example. As

late as 1927 the cost of electrification of Indian barracks was estimated at Rs 1 lakh. Considered too high, instead lamps, with their oil allowance, were transferred to the Indian lines from British units which were being provided electricity. The electrification of Indian lines had to await a new rebuilding plan. Apart from the argument for economy, it was stated at the time by C-in-C Birdwood that since Indian soldiers never complained about the lighting arrangements in their barracks the problem could not be considered a part of service grievances in the same way as pay, pension, and leave. Irwin, with complacency barely hidden, joined in observing that Indian soldiers hardly read anything and were accustomed to village lighting arrangements. In his opinion electricity was of no use to the Indians: 'It is indeed doubtful if the Indian soldier will read much, even when he gets electric light in his barracks'.[36]

Before 1920 a scheme had been prepared to establish a Kitchener College to educate the sons of Indian officers to enable them gain direct promotion to jamadar rank. It was thought that this college would incidentally prepare some bright pupils for Sandhurst and indirectly reserve the Indian KCO ranks for the trusted sons of the army. The idea was to keep the 'political' Indian middle class out of military service. The EC wanted these reforms carried out fast or else 'the earnest desire of the risaldars or subedars, to see a road by which their sons can climb higher than the fathers', would 'be doomed to disappointment'.[37] A network of such military colleges to serve vested interests in the army could later be developed. Indian members of the EC argued for an Indian Sandhurst but finally agreed with the majority that the time for it was not ripe in 1919–20.[38]

Even the jawans were demanding better education. It was well known that army schools were inefficient, there was no education policy regarding regimental schools and the teachers in regimental schools were ill paid. The headmasters drew a paltry Rs 25 (2 pounds-10 shillings) a month. The grant for text books, prizes, stationery and other equipment was only Rs 30 a month. Accommodation, libraries and lighting were conspicuous by their absence with Rs 10 per month being sanctioned for these. Obviously an army of peasants dependent upon village networks had neglected education. As politics assumed greater social importance, and nationalism became popular even in

rural areas, it began to be understood that badly paid teachers could undermine loyalty in the army. In fact, the EC neatly concluded, that there was 'little to prevent the regimental school being a centre for discontent and even disloyalty'.[39]

But alarm gave rise to unrealistic policy prescriptions. The adoption of a system similar to that prevalent in England was recommended. Since education was considered integral to military training the commanding officers were asked to take charge of regimental education. An Indian wing of the proposed Army Education Corps was required with the personnel comprising Indian officers and NCOs trained as teachers to foster invaluable traditions. In fact education had to be made a *recruitment incentive* for a peasantry facing limited opportunities in a colonial economy. However the EC could not anticipate that the armed forces, with budgetary constraints ruling supreme during the inter-War years, would themselves curtail the opportunities for the peasantry.[40]

The economic demands of Indian officers were considered equally important. The VCOs, for instance, maintained that family pensions were insufficient to keep their widows 'from the borders of starvation'. Significantly the social criteria for granting family pensions in India and Britain were different. In England the pension was given to the widow. In India it was a 'contribution to the family generally by way of compensation for the loss of one of its bread winners'. According to the EC those who wanted Indian pensions to be placed on a par with English pensions failed 'to recognize the connection of the Indian family pension with the land, and its corporate organization and system of mutual support'.[41] Much of this had changed in recent times. During the War the number of widows and orphans had risen substantially especially in Punjab, economic conditions had worsened, and in numerous instances older customs had failed to safeguard dependents from poverty and hunger. Therefore in 1919–20 the government was squarely asked to shoulder the responsibilities earlier handled by the Indian joint family. That the government knew so little of Indian social institutions was reason enough to correct official misconceptions:

> The veil which hides Indian family life from outside intrusion is a bar to that perfect knowledge which should precede decision; but we feel

strongly that any government which sends a married soldier of any race to a war in which he loses his life should be actually responsible for providing a pension sufficient to keep his widow and children from want, and should not make its contribution dependent upon the intricacies of a family system into which it cannot penetrate.[42]

Pay, due to post-War inflation, was a crucial issue in 1920. The *jawan's* pay had only been Rs 11 per month since 1911. Added to this he received a monthly War bonus of Rs 4 and if serving overseas and in the NWFP an additional field *batta* of Rs 5 per month. Thus some jawans received Rs 15 and some Rs 20 a month. Before the War soldiers got free rations only on service but during and after it rations became forever free. The much mentioned War bonus was actually declared in 1918 and it represented 'the increase in prices, or the fall in purchasing power, of the sepoy's basic rate of pay'. Furthermore this bonus was neither permanent nor incorporated in the overall pay. Making this permanent, but ruling out further increases was the paternal recommendation of the EC.[43] The cost of maintaining a sepoy was officially calculated in the following manner. Before 1917, when monthly pay was only Rs 11, Rs 3.80 was calculated as the cost of food. Sepoys received cash compensation when prices of staples rose. Hence Rs 7.20 was the net pay of the sepoy.[44] During the War free rations were granted but the troops retained the allowance of Rs 3.80 originally earmarked for food. Later a War bonus of Rs 4 was declared making total pay Rs 15. This was almost double the net pay received in 1914. The real cost of living was higher. Rations at 1919–20 prices came to Rs 14 per month for a sepoy and this meant that actually the government was spending Rs 29 (14 + 15) on each soldier per month. Feeding the men was the government's responsibility and jawans were not likely to sympathetically consider the official calculations based on 1919–20 prices: 'The Indian soldier has seen the world during the last six years in a way he never has before. His ideas of comfort have risen, and he has acquired certain tastes to which he was previously a stranger. He is well aware of what has been done for the British soldier in the way of amelioration of conditions of life and pay since the war began, and he is now apt to compare his own pay with that of his British comrades'.[45]

Despite rank and file grumbling, recruitment did not languish in 1918–19. But this did not merit complacence because it was only due to worsening domestic conditions. However, new factors began working against the armed forces. Many Indian soldiers, especially the Sikhs, were becoming mechanics in large numbers This led the EC to ruefully observe that 'pay far beyond that which the army can offer is obtainable now by Indians with even a small knowledge of machinery'. This reference to the competition between the armed forces and civilian society for technicians remained valid even during and after the Second World War.[46] Several enterprising Indians were also taking advantage of lucrative openings in the Far East and trends indicated that this outflow of men trained in the services would continue. India had 'before her a period of industrial and agricultural' growth which would attract thousands of young men of the 'martial classes'.[47] The fear of losing the 'martial classes' was paramount because the official mind could not come to grips with the fact, despite the experience of the War, that ultimately the supply of recruits and later more suitable recruits would dry up in the favoured classes. The government gave several reasons for not raising the pay of jawans beyond 1918 levels. It assumed that a pay double of what was given up to 1916 was sufficient for soldiers' needs. The increase in cost of living was, rather hopefully, considered transient. It was observed that all sepoys were not married and in future the proportion of unmarried sepoys would grow. It was never contemplated that the pay of a youth of 18 to 25 'should suffice for the entire maintenance of a wife and family, who in practice usually rely for support largely upon their share in an agricultural holding, cultivated by other members of the family'.[48] More convincingly, however, finance militated against a raise because it 'would inevitably result in an increase to the pay of other employees of the Government such as police and forest subordinates and the like'.[49] Indian revenues were in no position to shoulder this burden.

Nonetheless the EC, informed by the peculiar conditions of 1920 as it was called for a raise, justified in its view at a time when political agitators were trying to undermine service loyalties. Improved service conditions were imperative to keep the martial races from lucrative civilian jobs in future. In fact,

long before 1919 a reconstruction programme for the troops' lines had been initiated by General Sir O'Moore Creagh and its speedy implementation was recommended by the EC in the disturbed 1920s. Significantly enough, the two Indians on the EC, following the changes in the British Army, wanted the abolition of corporal punishment in the Army. The EC, however, concluded that the Army HQ would hopefully tackle the question with sympathy![50]

The scope of the Esher recommendations was broad and included the RIM. In fact before the EC took up the matter of military reform in India Lord Hardinge in 1911 had been hopeful of obtaining economies in the Indian Marine with an eye on 'future shrinking revenue'.[51] Soon after the Great War, in April 1919, Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Jellicoe, had carried out an extensive survey of Indian naval defence and needs. In 1920 the Indian Marine Service Act of 1884 defining and establishing the auxiliary nature of the RIM was in force. The Marine Regulations of 1886 and 1918 did little to change matters and India had virtually no navy from 1863 when the Indian Navy of the East India Company was formally abolished.[52] In 1920 the Marine had 225 officers of all ranks in its executive and engineering branches nominated from training ships and the mercantile marine by the Secretary of State. The Marine managed the substantial dockyard of Bombay and the smaller ones at Kidderpore and Mandalay. It also handled the work of marine survey, a legacy of the nineteenth century. The officers of the service had their commissions signed by the King and recognized by the Admiralty. The 'subordinate part' of the service comprised some 2000 Indians who manned the ships and numerous others in charge of the several dockyards.[53]

In 1919 Lord Jellicoe advocated the expansion of the RIM into an Indian Navy in the near future. The Government of India considered this proposal but was unable to implement it although it was understood that in future the RIM would have to be expanded even to 'undertake certain fresh responsibilities' like policing the Persian Gulf. The Director of the service in 1920 was a senior officer of the Royal Navy (RN) and was nominated by the Admiralty with the usual concurrence of the Secretary of State. The Director submitted his proposals to the Secretary in the Army Department who in turn as a soldier took orders on

Marine questions from the Army member. The Admiralty was not responsible for training the service even though according to law it could take over the RIM during war if necessary. The budget of the RIM was controlled by army authorities as a separate section of the military budget. The making of Indian naval matters completely subservient to the Admiralty and the Army had developed during the nineteenth century with the abolition of Company rule.[54] The EC wanted the Admiralty to help the service keeping in mind the larger imperial interests. Since the RIM was an Indian service paid for and maintained by the Government of India the EC recommended that its Director be a rear admiral on the active list having the status of secretary to the Government of India. In this way the Director subordinated to the C-in-C would simultaneously have direct access to the Viceroy. This change was ostensibly suggested to make administrative reform in future easy.

Since the nineteenth century the system of employing and maintaining *lascar* crews had remained unchanged. The *syrang* (native petty officer) often controlled the lascars and it was his responsibility to see that the men assembled rapidly and performed their duties. Syrangs as jobbers and caste seniors formed a code of conduct for the crews and were important enough to perform as gunners in the latter's absence.[55] They performed the role of VCOs in the RIM. In the Bombay Dockyard Establishment in 1930 syrangs were earning Rs 80 per month in the artificer grade. In the Marine Transport Establishment of Bombay and Karachi lascar pay ranged from Rs 15 to Rs 31 per month. *Sukhanis and tindals*, placed between lascars and syrangs, usually received Rs 56 and Rs 40 per month respectively. At lowest level were the *topasses* and lascar boys who now performed menial duties and were no longer soldier-sailors as their names suggested. Placed slightly above these were the stokers and lascars called native seamen. Surprisingly the wages paid to the syrangs and the tindals were equal to those paid to English petty officers and leading seamen respectively.[56] This underlines their importance to British shipping in the East in general.

Obvious improvements had taken place since the Great War. A comparison with the wages of 1917 shows that the pay of syrangs, who were also given pensions since 1871, improved

between 1917 and 1930 rising from Rs 30–40 to Rs 80 a month. Lascars received Rs 25 per month in 1917 which was more than what most sepoys got in 1919. The pay of sukhanis and tindals remained the same between 1917 and 1930, although in some establishments tindal rates improved slightly. On the whole the wages of syrangs, tindals, and skilled artificers rose over time whereas the pay of lascars and topasses showed stagnation.[57] This underscores the growing significance of technicians and their bargaining power in terms of remuneration in general between the two World Wars.

For reform the RIM, essentially a nineteenth-century organization like the Indian Army, had to be 'radically altered' and 'much improved'. In 1919 recruitment was unsystematic. Stokers and crews were haphazardly engaged in Bombay and usually syrangs were asked to collect crews. Since it became difficult to assemble crews after the War the setting up of a regular recruitment agency with its HQ at Ratnagiri, presumably to continue traditional recruitment, was thought crucial. Lads had to be taken on young for training. Pay, pension, leave rules, and maintaining reserves had to be considered afresh. Experimental Indianization was also called for with suitable candidates availing of education in the higher branches of seamanship and marine engineering. It was recommended that the RIM handle the Persian Gulf and take the place of expensive British sailors. The EC, echoing Malcolm's sentiment of the early nineteenth century, was confident that the 'Indian, trained and led by British officers, will be a match for any enemy that he is likely to encounter there'.[58]

The contentment of the armed forces in India was the guarantee of British rule in the subcontinent and the British strategic position in the East in general but the achievement of higher military standards in India not only called for substantial resources but a political will to overrule several historical continuities governing the armed forces in 1919. The EC recommendations touched upon a broad agenda of reform thought necessary after the War. But in the first place the Esher recommendations were predicated upon a naive hope that a liberal climate after the War would create the space and official mentality for military reform in India. However, given India's political, industrial, and agrarian conditions in 1919–20, years

would pass before the Esher recommendations could even be taken seriously. Second, on several issues the Committee upheld the status quo and proceeded along the old lines of British fears and colonial caution. Thus on the politically crucial issue of Indianizing the officer corps, on the ideology and policy of recruitment from the 'martial races', or even the simple demand to abolish corporal punishment in the army, the EC displayed a lack of foresight and firm commitment. Divided Indian opinion in the Committee probably contributed to this slackness. For instance, Sir Krishna G. Gupta took the nationalist position on Indianization which stated that Dominion Status would be incomplete without it. In this view the the post-1857 British distrust of Indians and the consequent reliance on 'martial classes' had to give way to a growing confidence in the educated middle classes. Gupta advocated an end to the concept of the martial races. This was consistent with the nationalist demand that in training and education self-sufficiency was of paramount importance to India because the import of men and materials from England constituted an economic drain. The 'only way of introducing economy without impairing efficiency' was to gradually 'increase the Indian element in the ranks as well as superior positions'.[59] The views of Sir Umar Hayat Khan, a conservative Punjabi landowner and a social representative of the officially favoured Punjabi Musalmans, presented a contrast. He tersely stated that because reform could not be allowed to undermine military tradition, the right type of men had to be sent up to Sandhurst. Partaking of current Russophobia he also warned against a possible combination of the military, revolutionary movements, and foreign aggression against the Raj in the near future. Hence the wavering sepoys had at all times to be stiffened with British troops. Alluding to the Bengali battalion he also suggested that the policy of recruiting the 'martial classes' was time tested and sound.[60]

The Government of India and the Esher Recommendations

The Esher recommendations provoked a great deal of scepticism in India and Keith Jeffery has drawn our attention to the tension

they caused between London and Delhi.[61] According to the Government of India, in 1920–1, 'Indian opinion did not understand that the structure contemplated by the EC, in which the Army in India was to play its part as one unit of a co-ordinated whole, had not yet come into full existence'.[62] This was largely true because no concrete plan of arranging India in a system of self-governing Dominions had emerged prior to the Esher recommendations. There were policy statements no doubt but no real movement towards the implementation of Wartime policies. In these circumstances the omnipresent fear of the Government of India losing control over the Army in India and becoming saddled with unaffordable increases in military spending naturally arose. Soon after receiving the ECR a Committee of the Indian Legislature examined it and, as a result of this, the Legislative Assembly in 1921 passed some important resolutions defining the attitude of the Government of India towards army reform in the 1920s. The Assembly, also under considerable Indian pressure, clearly stated that the primary purpose of the Army in India was the defence and maintenance of internal order. For other purposes, 'the obligations resting on India should be no more onerous than those resting on the self-governing dominions, and should be undertaken subject to the same conditions as are applicable to those areas'. The Assembly also recommended the deployment of the Indian Army outside India only 'with the previous consent of the Governor General in Council in very grave emergencies'.[63]

Behind these Assembly resolutions can be traced mounting public criticism of military expenditure in India, the growing demand for Indianization, and the pressure brought upon the Raj by the anti-Rowlatt uprising and the Non-Cooperation movement. The discussions on the Esher recommendations in the Viceroy's Council preceding 1921–2 also say a lot about the predicament of a besieged government as far as military reform was concerned. The Viceroy circulated copies of parts I and II of the ECR with his comments to members of his council in March 1920. Admittedly conditions in India were not 'normal' when the ECR was received by the Government of India, and on several points in it a conflict of opinion was noticeable between London and Delhi.[64]

The recommendations of the EC were based on three principles of policy. First was the assertion of control of the Government of India over Indian military affairs; second was the importance given to imperial affairs in the reckoning of Indian defence; and third was the exercise of a considered influence of the Imperial General Staff upon the 'military policy' of the Government of India. These principles, except the first, led several critics in the Government of India to suspect the designs of the EC. It was thought the ECR was an 'attempt to deprive India of control of her own armed forces and to make them a tool for Imperial aggression in Central Asia'. Later on the Government of India also admitted that the 'phraseology of certain parts of the Report combined with some isolated *obiter dicta* unessential to the main project, was such as to lend these suspicions an air of verisimilitude'.[65] Indian political circles misconstrued the central argument of the ECR which stated that Indian military policy after 1918 could not be divorced from general coordination of imperial resources, requirements, and organization if India was to become a self-governing Dominion in the British Commonwealth of nations. In the debate on the Esher recommendations the Government of India defended itself on the basis of the fundamental British principle 'of control by the civil power over military matters', although there was little in the ECR to suggest a replay of the Curzon–Kitchener debate in the 1920s. The Indian political position on military matters was also important because

> under no circumstances, of course...could Indian political leaders be expected to look with favour upon any policy which seems, however remotely, either to deprive the Indian Government, over which they have legitimate aspirations for control, of unfettered direction of the Indian Army; or to hint at the possible employment of Indian forces for ends in which India herself is but partly concerned.

This disapproval of EC recommendations was also due to military conditions in the troubled Middle East:

> The troubles in Mesopotamia, and the rumoured agreement for the reorganization of Persia seemed in India to involve the continued employment for an indefinite period of Indian troops overseas.... Hence it was that the recommendations of the first part of the Esher Committee's Report, which had as their aim the determination of

the place of the Army in India in a future scheme for the military organization of the whole Commonwealth, excited a storm of reprobation.[66]

The Government of India could hardly consider matters of military reform in India without keeping an eye on its treasury in the first place, and misunderstanding regarding military finance between the Government of India and the Secretary of State dated back to the pre-War period. For instance, in 1908, following the Mowatt Committee's recommendations regarding reduction of military expenditure in India, the Viceroy had criticized the Secretary of State's interference in Indian military expenditure. Trouble arose over expenditure undertaken on redistribution and accomodation of troops and other scheduled measures. In his criticism the Viceroy mentioned that the despatch from the Secretary of State to him regarding these matters in 1907 'wholly abrogated' the building powers of the Government of India, which were ordinarily limited to £ 67,000 in the redistribution schemes then being practised by the Indian Army. The Secretary of State even wanted to approve sanctioned measures, arrived at after lengthy deliberations between London and the Government of India, and the Viceroy objected to this.[67]

In 1921, in the press and the central legislature, questions concerning India's defence assumed great importance because of the 'financial stringency' of the immediate post-War years. The popular demand for economy in the armed forces was rising because the initial total grant for the military in 1921–2 amounted to some Rs 622 million which was a very high proportion of the expenditure of and the revenue raised by the central government.[68] On the other hand attempts at effecting savings in the services were failing. For instance although due to the efforts of Lord Rawlinson a saving of Rs 12.9 million was effected in the established charges of the army in the financial year 1921–2, the cost of operations in Waziristan, consequent upon the third Afghan War, 'swallowed up this saving' and boosted spending further with the result that revised expenditure on military requirements during 1921–2 actually came to Rs 650 million.[69] Furthermore the hard-pressed Government of India was continuously being asked to increase military expenditure on hospitals, etc. which was desirable but, as a member pointed out,

'beyond' the government's 'capacity to finance'. The member also noted with some anger that the demands of the India Office regarding pensions for British officers in the Indian Army betrayed 'a spirit of great extravagance'.[70] The Government of India understood the omnipresent need for reform but in future things were going to be difficult. Hailey touched the nub in observing that: 'I believe that army finance and army economy are going to be far more difficult subjects in the future, and that it is necessary to consider now an organization which will be effective in the new order of things'.[71]

In London the ECR had priority in the immediate post-War years, conditioned by the overriding imperial and military questions. While the Government of India discussed its several sections between between March and August 1920 the report in full was submitted to the British government in June 1920. Parts III and IX were submitted on 22 June 1920 and their copies were dispatched by mail to the Government of India two days later with the Secretary of State urging the Government of India to expedite the process of forming its views. In India delays were occurring because of a growing nationalist movement which demanded government attention. After long and careful deliberation the Government of India finally expressed its opinion on parts I and II of the report in August 1920. In London, on the other hand, opinion was growing to get the ECR published as soon as possible.[72]

The Great War imposed on India 'a vastly enhanced permanent military liability' and changed its military position in colonial defence and strategy. 'These added imperial liabilities in effect' represented some 33 per cent of the aggregate military liabilities of the Government of India and rendered 'the Army in India an Imperial rather than a purely Indian Force.'[73] Implied in this reading of imperial defence was the Indian search for imperial resources. Furthermore this interpretation of contemporary military affairs was underscored by the inadequacy of the Indian military organization in meeting post-1918 demands. The 'apparent lack of co-ordination as between policy, financial liability, and military resources' had led to a series of orders and counter-orders causing confusion at the army HQ besides leaving the troops disturbed. This experience supported the Government of India's case and it demanded more autonomy

in Indian military matters although it was willing to bend on crucial policy and strategic issues:

> While, therefore, on questions of policy and strategy we desire a greater degree of direction and control by the Imperial authorities, on *matters affecting the execution of that policy such as the size of and nature of the forces to be provided, their organization and the system of maintenance and reliefs, we consider that the Government of India should be the deciding authority in order to obviate the interminable delay which occurs under the present system and also because such matters directly affect the finances of the country.*[74]

But in certain areas of industrial and defence planning, the Government of India found the Esher recommendations interesting. The provision of armament from within India, to save money spent on imports, was one. Since it was widely known in India that Indian armed forces could not entirely depend on largely obsolete government ordnance the Government of India welcomed the Esher emphasis on the connection between industrial development and military strength. In fact the army was supposed to generate a lot of demand for Indian industry. It was believed that Indian services would also deal in 'the greatest extent possible with private firms'. This was in line with contemplated reform which sought to 'develop the industries of the country and to render India self supporting'.[75] However, as the 1920s unfolded, much of this was exposed as wishful thinking.

While the Secretary of State, apparently unaware of the mixed reactions to the ECR in India, was pressing for its publication, the Government of India took its time over it. To begin with, opposition arose from an overstretched Indian Army. The C-in-C, General Munro, thought that early publication of the report was 'calculated to force the hands of Government' and, in the peculiar conditions prevalent in India after 1918, this could hardly be overlooked. The Government of India had to keep its political options open in a troubled India and hence a premature committment to new policy had to be avoided at all costs. Further, several aspects of the relationship between imperial foreign policy and the Indian armed forces had to be discussed afresh in the peculiar scenario of the 1920s before reform could be attempted. The War had taught the Government of India new military lessons in comparison with

which the usual frontier campaigns or a limited war against Afghanistan appeared simple affairs. According to Munro matters had become more complicated because London usually ignored the Government of India while formulating and executing imperial strategy. This was most unfortunate because more often than not the Indian Army, which was the Government of India's armed preserve, was crucial to this strategy. In future the ratio between imperial policy objectives and requisite armed strength to achieve them had to be understood. As Munro summed up:

> That policy should presumably bear some relation to the latter's [India's] military strength, and if this be true, we ought to be in much closer touch with the Home authorities and some understanding should be arrived at with them as to the role, within the Empire, which India may be called upon to discharge.[76]

After 1914 India had emerged as 'the portion of the Empire which' possessed 'the largest military reserves'. The government commanding them wanted a certain degree of autonomy on issues of policy and strategy.[77]

The increasing deployment of Indian troops outside India, entailing massive financial and social costs, was also causing concern in India. The imperial government invariably requisitioned Indian troops in countries where neither India nor Indians had interests without truly appreciating the problems this caused for the Government of India.[78] Such risks were not faced by the British Army which was conscript and better equipped. In comparison, the compulsions underlying volunteer service were entirely different in India. Costly incentives, which endangered tight budgets, had to be given to volunteers serving abroad. It was difficult to maintain recruitment standards when demands rose and this threatened military traditions. Indian opinion and the views of large bodies of jawans opposed the prolonged deployment of Indian troops abroad. In Mesopotamia, and elsewhere, Indians had fought in extremely harsh conditions but were denied the right to settle. This was fodder for large-scale discontent. For publicized reasons, various political associations as well as sections of the Indian press opposed the stationing of Indian troops in Islamic countries. Furthermore there was every possibility of this point being

pressed by 'all classes of politicians in future' and thus encouraging politicization of the Muslim-dominated sections of the armed forces.[79] In short the military problem of impoverished India was immense. As late as August 1920 the Government of India funded almost 200,000 combatants in countries where India had 'comparatively little interest save as part of the Empire'. Thus, in the interest of the Raj, the extent of India's imperial liability compared with the responsibilities of the self-governing dominions like Australia and Canada, which played a comparatively minor part in furnishing troops for purely imperial purposes, had to be fixed. Furthermore the Government of India, after the War, was meeting its imperial obligations in the teeth of nationalist opposition and severe economic problems. It was only fair, felt its representatives, to determine and fix realistic Indian liabilities if she were ever to become a Dominion.

The Government of India was weighed down by financial limitations and militant nationalism. For it, treading the path between growing domestic hostility to the Raj and geopolitical committment to imperial strategy was a delicate affair. On top of this imperial concessions were not enough in a period symptomatic of imperial crisis. In the words of one official, it was 'clear at once that the mere agreement on the part of His Majesty's Government to pay for forces despatched overseas, or even to re-imburse us for the depots maintained for supplying such forces with the drafts required by them did not compensate' the Government of India for the 'financial and general burden' imposed upon it.[80] Beside this, unpredictable imperial decisions often threw normalcy out of gear. For example, after the War the Government of India was asked to keep two divisions ready for Mesopotamia. This severely jeopardized demobilization and the disposal of surplus stores. Matters became worse when the War Office later asked the Government of India to raise these divisions without incurring extra expenditure but this was 'not humanly possible'.[81]

Sometimes the War Office almost found excuses to impose extra financial burdens on the Government of India, and Hailey cited a 'monstrous claim' of this sort. In his despatch on the Afghan campaign of 1919–21 the C-in-C had referred to the East Persian Force becoming involved in the conflict to cut off

Bolshevik assistance to Afghanistan from an outflanking position:

> This remark had a perfectly limited and intelligible meaning. It will perhaps hardly be believed that these words were used by the War Office (with some support from the India Office) as the foundation of a monstrous claim that we should pay half the expenditure on the East Persian Force.[82]

The Government of India 'combated' this claim which 'raised at all instances' the danger of its position as a supplier of troops on the following condition. 'We supply troops on demand, and on an implied understanding that they will be paid for. Once they have been supplied, every attempt will obviously be made to get behind that understanding'.[83] The Government of India was also afraid of the Imperial General Staff acquiring sweeping powers over Indian military matters. The latter's assistance was most welcome but the control of the Governor General over Indian matters was more important. Political Indians, unlike their brothers in the nineteenth century, had become conscious of military affairs, and their confidence in their ability to criticize military policy was set to grow with the introduction of new constitutional reforms after 1919. Although the new Government of India Act excluded the army budget from Assembly vote, caution was necessary because the government could no longer take Indians for granted. It was 'necessary to avoid any suspicion that the expenditure of funds provided by Indian taxation for the Army in India is subject to any other direction than that of the Governor General in Council acting under the statutory control of Parliament as excercised through the Secretary of State for India'.[84]

Hence the Government of India wanted to be consulted on all questions of policy which indicated the deployment of Indian troops outside India: 'Where each employment is found to be necessary, a definite request should in our opinion be made in advance to the Government of India, and their views on the subject should be fully considered by the Imperial Government'.[85]

Experiences after the armistice did not warrant unrestrained deployment of Indian troops at the prevalent political and economic costs of the Government of India. Moreover, uneven

demobilization enhanced the risk of protest in the armed forces at a time when mass nationalism was growing in India. The fact that considerable units remained outside India after 1918 made planned reorganization on a post-War basis impossible. The discrimination between imperial and Indian troops in the management of imperial affairs was another matter of concern. On this the Government of India reminded the imperial government:

> This called for direct changes in the system of supplying the services if British rule was to be maintained under conditions of widespread social unrest in India. [The] respect of demobilisation and release does not compare favourably [in India] with that accorded to British and Dominion troops, and further that these troops have been retained in territories for which Great Britain has received a mandate,without due regard to our convenience, or to the political situation in India, or to the effect which such action may have had on political opinion in this country.[86]

The Compulsions of Money

It has already been observed that tensions between the Government of India and London on matters of army reform in India were evident before the Great War. The limitations of the British in maintaining or increasing military expenditure in India already had a history before 1914. In the context of that history it would be wrong to assume that the economic effect of the Great War was a factor without antecedents responsible for retarding military reform in India between the two World Wars. However, in the 1920s everyone's attention was focused, with justification, on the effects of the War on Indian finances. Perhaps a look at the pre-War Kitchener Scheme and the Mowatt Committee's recommendations based on its examination will help place the retrenchment of the 1920s in perspective.

The Second Afghan War and the Tirah Operations of 1897–8, as pointed out earlier, had exposed serious deficiencies in the organization of the Army in India and Lord Kitchener's Scheme of 1904 was an attempt to remove some of them. The Scheme was designed primarily to increase the size and efficiency of the Field Army by reducing the numerical strength of the 'obligatory garrisons', i.e. troops tied down in internal security duties. The

most economical way of increasing the size of the Field Army was to reduce the burden of internal duties on the regular units and the deployment of mobile units to quell domestic unrest. The overall efficiency of the Field Army was dependent on the development of manpower and material reserves, the imposition of the divisional command system to bring the peacetime organization of the army in line with wartime organization, and the extension of railways in the sensitive Frontier region. Kitchener argued that since Indians were unarmed, efficient policing, with help from the Princely States, could control them. Therefore, to permanently station troops as garrisons for civil purposes was not only outdated, if one took into account the railway factor, but also very expensive. The reduction of these garrisons was the most economical way of increasing the Field Army *without* increasing the total establishment of the Army in India. According to Kitchener's calculations, doing this would have released some 50,000 men for the Field Army at a time when the high command was anticipating a Russian drive towards Kabul.

The Mowatt Committee studied all this and appreciated the plan to increase the Field Army but its conclusion signalled an unmistakeable move towards economy in the ultimate analysis. If the Field Army, as a result of these measures, expanded 'beyond what is necessary for the protection of India against external aggression, the natural and economical course would be to reduce the total establishment'. This conclusion was reached despite the fact that the Government of India had framed the estimates 'with moderation and economy' when it came to implementing the Kitchener Scheme and preparing India for a possible war against Afghanistan. The shortage of officers was acute and 950 British officers were required to fit the Indian Army for calculated field duty according to the Scheme. Kitchener called the shortage of officers 'one of the most prominent defects under which the Indian Army' laboured at the time. In 1907, General Duff, the C-in-C, revised the figure to a more economical 567 but even then the shortage was great. The upshot of the Mowatt survey was strikingly similar to that of the retrenchment proposals of the 1920s. The probable implementation of the Kitchener Scheme had to wait till 1912–13 or even 1913–14, and unless civil expenditure declined

military expenditure could not rise or even be maintained at the 1907 level. Furthermore, after the Russo-Jap war the international situation had changed, and with the growth of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the Far East the fear of a Russian attack on India had diminished. This signalled some relief for the Indian taxpayer and, by implication, stagnation for the Army in India.[87]

After 1918 military reform was perceived as part of a general shift in British policy to guide India towards Dominion Status. But simultaneously retrenchment was an attempt to preserve the Raj. By 1923 the shrill cry of retrenchment began to militate against the recommendations of the Esher Committee. Balancing the budget by curtailing public expenditure and effecting savings became the chief concern of the Retrenchment Committee (IRC) because during the war government expenditure had soared.[88] The question was, as it still is, whether India could afford substantial military spending. According to an IRC frowning upon the series of huge post-War deficits this was impossible despite growing taxation. Thus, to balance the budget, 'a very substantial reduction in the military estimates' was the order for the day.[89] And, according to the IRC, this could be achieved in the near future because the Government of India was apparently abandoning its forward policy in Waziristan.[90]

To promote savings the IRC pinpointed several areas in which military expenditure could be curtailed as safely as possible. For instance, the cost of the British soldier in India was Rs 2500 per annum which was very high compared with the cost of an Indian soldier. Between 1913–14 and 1922–3 the peacetime strength of British battalions in India had increased but during the War the fighting efficiency of these units had grown sufficiently to allow retrenchment. Since in England the peace- as well as wartime strength of battalions was lower than in India the IRC advocated a reduction of 5700 men. This was important because in future the cost of maintaining British soldiers would increase even if the Esher reforms were not implemented. The cost of the Indian soldier in 1922–3 was Rs 361 per annum and, although this was far below the British average, reductions were advised in active as well as training battalions with the Gurkhas, as usual, remaining an exception. In fact the Government of India was advised to develop cheaper

reserves to further lower peacetime battalion strength.[91] Similarly the bloated HQs and commands required trimming. Economies were also recommended in the spheres of animal and mechanical transport which had grown during the war.[92]

On the whole the IRC suggested a saving of Rs 30.3 million per annum by the reduction of the fighting services and another 6.3 million by a reduction of 20 per cent in the strength of Indian battalions. Importantly, it wanted the Government of India to be given full opportunity to review any 'proposed changes in the administration of British troops involving large expenditure' *before* such expenditures were undertaken.[93] In advising the Government of India to limit the army budget to Rs 510.47 million for the year 1923–4, the IRC laid down the framework of the Indian military budget for the inter-War period and ruled out the implementation of the Esher recommendations.[94]

Towards naval defence, the IRC recommendations were particularly harsh and contradicted the Government of India's position at the Imperial Conference of 1923. In any case, the Government of India's committment to imperial naval defence had overlooked its financial position. The RIM had considerably expanded during the War but the IRC wanted it 'drastically curtailed' with a budget of only Rs 6.2 million for 1923–4, which was Rs 7.5 million less than the estimates of 1922–3. Several ships were to be laid up and all surplus vessels sold.[95] The IRC however said nothing about the subvention of the £100,000 per annum which the Government of India paid to the Admiralty for the services of the Royal Navy. This drain could otherwise have been utilized in India to help meet the Government of India's commitment at the Imperial Conference of 1923. However, the IRC's obsession with economy led to strategic myopia, because in the early 1920s 'it was not anticipated that the Royal Navy might some day be left alone to contend with the German and Italian fleets and to guard the seas of the world at the same time. It was also not foreseen that a war would threaten India from the East'.[96]

In 1921, General C. C. Munro had composed an essay of facts regarding the Indian armed forces which was probably ignored by the IRC.[97] According to Munro there were significant differences between Indian and British military problems

and many critics did not realize this while criticizing the Indian armed forces. In Britain there were no land frontiers and the naval factor was preponderant but India had a vulnerable frontier and a 'population subject to outbursts of fanaticism and influenced by the conditions of unrest which are so prevalent throughout the world'. India had no reserves, its police was inefficient, and British soldiers in India were never numerous enough to check massive popular outbursts. After the War, with mass nationalism and Pan-Islamism rising and Bolsheviks trying to overthrow the Raj, threats to British rule had multiplied. In these circumstances a minimum but efficient force was necessary to protect British interests in India. This would comprise 12.25 brigades for the NWFP, four divisions against possible attacks, and twelve infantry brigades in reserve for internal duties. Munro was 'convinced that a small force properly staffed, adequately equipped, well trained, and with the correct proportion of ancilliary services' would be more effective than a large ill-equipped force. He warned against further retrenchment while advocating levels lower than those of 1914, but neither naval defence nor the rising cost of modern military technology were considered by him at any stage. Both quality and quantity required funds which the IRC was unwilling to grant.

The provisional budget for 1920–1, calculated in December 1919 by the Military Accountant General, amounted to Rs 610 million. This was obviously unacceptable as the normal peace-time liability. In January 1920, it was decided to scale down the budget to Rs 450 million by eliminating non-essentials. In February 1920, army estimates were re-examined and it was recommended that Rs 600 million were necessary for servicing the army in 1920–1. Extra money was needed for operations. For a while this increased expenditure was unavoidable because of concessions made to the services soon after the War. The substantially increased cost of British troops in India further strained budgetary provisions. The exchange rate between the pound and rupee and post-War inflation was another factor to contend with, and the fact that Rs 50 million were being sanctioned for the occupation of Waziristan since 1919–20 did not make matters easier.[98] A diplomatic success against Afghanistan would certainly have helped the financial situation more than the persistence of a jaded Russophobia. Of the gross sum

of Rs 650 million for overall military expenditure in 1920–1, Rs 600 million were for the maintenance of the army, Rs 45 million for special expenditures in Waziristan, and Rs 5 million for precautionary mobilization, again on the frontier. The Government of India agreed to provide for operations separately. However, accepted increases to satisfy the armed forces resulted in the maintenance charges usually exceeding budgetary allocations. This had drastic consequences for the future because it 'necessitated the reappropriation of the amount set aside for capital expenditure on the purchase of equipment and stores and on various measures of reorganization'. Despite this, 'concessions granted to British troops' were to 'involve an excess over alloted grants'. Growing charges of the RAF would also add to financial strain.[99]

The implementation of the proposed Esher reforms at 1920 prices involved an annually recurring expenditure of about Rs 30 million. Including this, the total military expenditure would have been Rs 680 million during 1921–2. This estimate neither provided for naval defence nor the proposed territorial force, nor even the improvement of defence-related factories. Thus, even before the IRC's recommendations were applied in 1924, allocations for capital expenditures were ruled out. In short, Rs 680 million were far too much for an exhausted colony in the 1920s or even the 1930s.[100]

While Munro warned against excessive retrenchment, the narrow basis of military finance in colonial India between the Wars was confirmed by the difficulties faced by the Military Council (MC) in its day-to-day functioning. The MC comprised the C-in-C as president, the Chief of the Army Staff (CAS) as vice-president, and the Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, Secretary Army Department and Financial Advisor as members. The MC was an advisory body whose agenda constituted a rough index of daily military affairs in India. Various cases and representations in the armed forces were considered by this body which took decisions on some matters. However, matters involving sizeable financial outlays were referred to the Government of India. From cars, ammunition, and bandmasters' allowances to budgets, Indianization, and clothing were discussed at the MC meetings. Limited Indianization received some support, and the officials felt the need for proper

education and an assessment of the likely troubles arising in India in future.[101]

But even minor expenditure was being avoided by the MC in 1921. For instance, the proposed increase of marriage allowances for British troops in India was referred to the Secretary of State. Similarly, when the issue of lighting military hospitals and troops' lines arose, despite the costs calculated in the budget of 1921–2, the formal approval of the government was sought. Technological improvements in the signal corps were accepted in principle but left to the availability of funds in 1922–3.[102] The military medical services, which had expanded during the war, were to be reduced significantly after it.[103]

Minor increases and demands were either refused or referred to the Financial Advisor or the Government of India. For instance, on the maintenance of a Technical Recruiting Organization during peacetime and its functions the MC unanimously suggested that such an organization would be 'necessary to meet the requirements of India only'. In fact, in a recommendation to the Government of India the MC stated that the British government be informed that 'in future they must make their own arrangements for the recruitment of technical personnel for employment in Mesopotamia or elsewhere'.[104] At the same meeting, three cases related to an increase in the expenditures of the RAF establishments in India were rejected outright. At the 28th meeting, even a paltry increase in the pay of mule driver reservists from Rs 3 to 4 per month was accepted only in principle, and that too on condition of further retrenchment.[105] The extreme centralization of control and paucity of resources were reflected in discussions on the following issues. The supply of fly-proof boxes to hold bedpans and urinals in the wards of British and Indian hospitals was discussed, although in April 1921 this demand had been accepted in principle. Even such indispensable sanitary arrangements were to be made in the final instance by the various commanding officers 'only as funds became available from savings under the grant and head of account affected'. As days passed, even the HQs suffered. On 17 August 1922, locating the Northern Command HQ in future could not be properly discussed because it was found that adequate funds were 'not likely to be available in the near future'. In 1922, with possibly drastic repurcussions,

most demands for increasing expenditure were rejected due to financial exigencies. For instance, grants to *pandits* and *moulvis* in the Indian army and free second class fare every three years for them were postponed till funds could 'be made available'. In 1922 there were some 524 religious teachers attached to different regiments and they exerted 'great influence...for good or evil' in the services. Financial limitations also ruled out the formation of a new Indian corps of clerks supposed to supply clerks to the establishments of Commands, Districts, and the Military Staff Offices.[106] This would hamper administration beside tarnishing the reputation of the services as big employers in a society of limited opportunities.

Conclusion

Michael Howard, in his useful book on British military policy, writes that after the Boer War 'The British Empire was isolated, not particularly splendidly, in a world of highly armed states, with a Navy whose supremacy still depended on the divisions among her adversaries and an Army incapable of taking the field against any single one of them'. In this context, it is not surprising to observe that when the Committee of Imperial Defence sat down to consider the problems of the Empire as a whole in 1902, of the three most important points on its agenda were two concerned with the Indian empire. First was the protection of India from Russia and second was the defence of Egypt and thereby the strategic line to India. This proves that British policy makers were seriously echoing Lord Curzon's prophesy: 'As long as we rule India we are the greatest power in the world. If we lose it we shall drop straight away to a third rate power.'[107] In the decade before the Great War the need to reform the imperial military structure, including the Indian armed forces, had been underlined by the military experiences of the late nineteenth century. But the question whether Great Britain and her greatly impoverished colonies had the necessary resources and perspective to do so was almost simultaneously highlighted by reports such as the ECR and their political reception in the troubled 1920s. The Government of India's response to the ECR, not to speak of its Indian reception, clearly revealed the hiatus between imperial armchair perspective and

colonial imperative. A close reading of the ECR tells us that the imperial planners, despite their Wartime promises made to the Indians, grossly underestimated the capability and desire of educated Indians to accord significance to matters of military expenditure and reform. Consequently the Esher Committee not only overlooked the possibility of opposition arising to its expressions and schemes from the Government of India but also failed to reflect the growing importance of Indian opinion in its recommendations.

The reform of the Army in India had assumed importance after the unhappy experiences of the Second Afghan War and the Tirah Operations. During the Great War political reform in India, including the reorganization of the Indian armed forces in the light of new imperial needs, emerged as the dominant theme of British policy in India. The formation of the EC and the subsequent ECR constituted the British perspective on Indian military reform with all its limitations. It has been seen how the EC wanted the Government of India, which was grappling with unprecedented military expenditure and nationalist protest soon after the Great War, to consolidate the advantages gained by the Indian armed forces during the War. But keeping Indian troops loyal in the face of militant mass nationalism was foremost in the EC, and this explains the ECR's respect for Indian military tradition. This deference for tradition and stability created a structural defect, noticeable in the Committee's attitude towards Indianization, in the British reform perspective. On the contrary, while expressing concern about the danger of falling recruitment among the 'martial races' the ECR failed to indicate Britain's growing confidence in the Indian middle class. In the Indian atmosphere of 1919–20 this was probably the correct thing to do as far as the British were concerned, but the attitude was inconsistent with the reform perspective guiding the Montague-Chelmsford scheme and demanded by Indian opinion. Hence, on many points, the ECR appeared self-contradictory. For instance, and despite the shortage of officers in India stressed before and during the Great War, the EC failed to anticipate that in the 1920s and 1930s Indianization and modernization of Indian services would have to go hand in hand. In India, on the other hand, military reform remained focused on Indianization largely due to Indian effort

in the 1920s and 1930s. In short, the EC argued for reform without considering the necessary social change in the Indian armed forces.

Finally, deteriorating economic conditions put paid to structural reform of the Indian military during the 1920s. A brief survey of pre-War reform suggests that tension between the needs of reform and the dictates of economy prevailed even before the Great War. But after the War the need for economy became paramount and while reform was discussed and publicized, the budgetary constraints of the Raj caught up with decision making. The military recommendations of the IRC, which were implemented in the mid-1920s, cancelled the reform and modernization of the Indian services in the 1920s. But even before retrenchment, the cost of reform calculated by Munro had suggested the obvious. Finally the adoption of an inter-War annual army budget of around Rs 50 crore ruled out effective material improvement till the Second World War. A survey of MC proceedings suggests that minor expenses, which would not have mattered to armed forces placed in more fortunate circumstances, in many instances were either ruled out or made conditional on availability of funds. In these conditions, capital expenditure required for the social and technological transformation of the Indian armed forces between Wars became conspicuous by its absence. With expenditure falling and the stagnating services desperately trying to preserve themselves, there was little chance of continuities responding to the challenge posed by nationalism in the context of total war. On the whole, official respect for tradition and a continuous accent on revenue over expenditure underpinned British military policy in India in the decade following the First World War:

> Of the imperative necessity of securing financial equilibrium we are convinced, since the alternative will be a progressive deterioration of our financial position, which, if not checked, must have grave consequences. The attainment of our objective can only be secured by, on the one hand, increasing our revenue, and on the other hand, by effecting economies. Although not absorbing a higher proportion of our total revenues than it has done for the past 20 years, the army does consume now roughly one-half of our central revenues, and clearly offers the widest field for retrenchment. We have, as you are aware,

been engaged for weeks past in exploring every possibility of effecting economies without endangering the national safety. While national security must always be the governing factor, financial considerations cannot be ignored. The financial position of the country must indeed have a marked political reaction on the question of national security, since a scale of military expenditure which exceeds our means to a large extent not only adds to the burden of taxation but also renders it impracticable to devote adequate funds to other urgently needed administrative measures, impedes industrial and economic development, raises prices and so creates such discontent in the country as to aggravate seriously the widespread unrest which now prevails in many parts of India.[108]

Endnotes

1. This chapter is based on the first chapter of my largely unpublished Ph.D thesis 'British Military Policy in India, 1919–1945', Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1996. An earlier version was presented at the conference on The New Military History of South Asia, Cambridge, UK, July 1997. I am grateful to Professor Partha Sarathi Gupta for his comments on an earlier draft.

2. Relevant details of the Peel (1859) and Eden (1879) Commission recommendations are found in V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army 1600–1974*, Delhi, 1974; Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Delhi, 1990; C. C.Trench, *The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 1900–1947*, London, 1988; Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj*, London, 1989; S. L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army From The Seventeenth to The Twenty First Century*, New Delhi, 1993; and David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860–1940*, London, 1994. A reading of these works makes it quite clear that the primary aim of the Peel and Eden reforms was to create a secure instrument of power in India involving, above all, a 'counterpoise of natives against natives'.

3. The history of the Bombay Marine has been critically re-examined by Anirudh Deshpande, 'The Bombay Marine: Aspects of Maritime History 1650–1850', *Studies in History*, vol. 11, no. 2, n.s. (1995).

4. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, The Indian Empire, vol. iv: Administrative*, New Edition, Oxford, 1907, pp. 347–53; *The Army in India and Its Evolution, Including an Account of the Establishment of the RAF in India*, Calcutta, 1924, Government publication, volume in Historical Section of the Ministry of Defence, New Delhi (hereafter

HS); *Military Handbook of General Information*, Government publication, 1908, volume in the Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi (hereafter CSL). For a review of changes in army organization up to 1914, see Cohen, *The Indian Army*, pp. 22–8, 32–56.

5. Morley Collection [Microfilm], Acc. No. 1615, National Archives of India (hereafter NAI).

6. Hardinge to Secretary of State Morley, 16 March 1911 in Morley Collection [Microfilm], Acc. No. 1614, NAI.

7. *The Army in India and its Evolution*, p. 33; *Military Handbook of General Information*. From the *Report of the Indian Retrenchment Committee, 1922–3* (hereafter *IRC*), Delhi, 1923, Part I Military Services, CSL, pp. 7–59, we know the following about the military expenditure of the Government of India, between 1913–14 and 1922–3. In 1913–14 actual expenditure was Rs 298,441,000, in 1921–2 the revised estimate was Rs 693,469,000 and in 1922–3 the budget estimate was Rs 677,526,000. Of this the Army expenditure showed an increase of 117 per cent between 1913–14 and 1922–3 largely due to rising prices and wartime expansion. In 1913–14 actual army expenditure stood at Rs 278,745,000. In 1921–2 the revised army estimate was Rs 618,242,000 whereas the budget estimate for the army in 1922–3 was Rs 604,230,000. In 1914 the total number of men in the army was 250,444 of which 76,214 were British and 154,437 Indians. The number of Indian troops serving during the War rose to 573,000 in 1918. In 1922 after demobilization the total was 233,801 of which 68,686 were British and 141,617 Indians.

8. *India in 1919, A statement prepared for presentation to Parliament in accordance with the requirements of the 16th Section of the Govt. of India Act (5 and 6 Geo V, chap. 61)*, CSL, pp. 6–19.

9. Colonel Horsley's (Army Medical Service) letter from the Indian Field Ambulance, The Front.Mesopotamia.Force 'D' to Carter of the Indian Medical Service, D/5/71916, enclosed in a letter to the Viceroy by Secretary of State E. Montagu, 3 Aug. 1917 in the Montagu Papers Acc. No. 1930 [Microfilm], NAI. It was Chamberlain's intention to send a copy of this letter to Chelmsford. The second Afghan War and experiences on the Frontier where the Afridis proved formidable opponents underlined the necessity of reforming the Army in India.

10. *India in 1919, A statement prepared for presentation to Parliament*, pp. 15, 19.

11. Army in India Committee: Table of Meetings, Names of witnesses & Subjects Discussed- Appendix- Minutes of First Meeting, 28 July 1919, Statement by Lt. Gen. Sir H. V. Cox in the Diaries,

Correspondence and Papers of Viscount Esher, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge. Secretary of State Montagu in a letter to Chelmsford dated 21 Nov. 1918, Acc. No. 1930, Montagu Papers [Microfilm], NAI, stated that he noticed 'increased signs' on the part of the War Office 'of a desire to get control of the Indian Army'. With regard to this he wanted the Viceroy to get a statement of the Indian case prepared and forwarded to him at an early date. This not only made the GoI, really scared of losing control over the Indian Army but also partially explains why the Esher recommendations attracted so much flak in India. For other details of the British involvement and aims in Mesopotamia during the Great War see V. H. Rothwell, 'Mesopotamia in British War Aims', *The Historical Journal*, vol. XIII, no. 2, 1970, pp. 273–94.

12. This section is a critical review of the *Report of the Army in India Committee 1919–20*, submitted to the British and Indian governments in 1920. Also known as the Esher Committee Report, it is hereafter referred to as the ECR.

13. Ibid., p. 3.

14. Ibid., p. 3.

15. Ibid., p. 7.

16. Ibid., p. 8.

17. The idea of India gaining Dominion Status in the near future guided this recommendation. In fact an Indian member of the Committee pointed out that without Indianization Dominion Status would be incomplete: Ibid., letter to E. S. Montagu prefacing parts III and IV and minute by Sir Krishna G. Gupta appended to the ECR, pp. 99–100. On issues related to Indianization see Chapter 7 by Professor Gupta in this volume.

18. ECR, pp. 4–5. Mutiny involving the 'martial races' had in fact occurred in Singapore in 1915. For details of this hidden event and the influence of hostile propaganda on Indian troops, see Farwell, *Armies of the Raj*, pp. 236–47. Cohen, *The Indian Army*, pp. 68–76 reviews the role of the Indian army in World War I but does not mention the Singapore mutiny. Conditions of warfare to be seen at the Imperial War Museum, London and vividly described from the battlefield by Trench, *The Indian Army and the King's Enemies*, pp. 75–90 could easily have led to discontent. Even Trench overlooks the Singapore mutiny.

19. ECR, p. 5. Ironically such immersion in internal security duties militated against training or even the aquisition of new equipment in the inter-war years as B. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 105, points out.

20. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, Oxford, 1980, pp. 54–69.

21. ECR, p. 37. A letter to Rufus from Secretary of State Montagu dated 18 Jan. 1922 (PRIVATE), Acc. No. 1934, Montagu Papers [Microfilm], NAI speaks of Indian troops having become unreliable and British troops being demanded in all the areas seriously affected by the Non-Cooperation movement. Montagu suggested doing away with the services of the Indian Army for internal duties and the creation of a 'mixed gendarmerie' in its place with a proper proportion of Europeans for protecting British interests in India. Speaking of the understandable Indian demand for the reduction of British troops in India, on 1 Feb. 1922 once again he wrote to Rufus about the necessity of employing British troops in India till a gendarmerie was formed.

22. ECR, p. 38.

23. Ibid., p. 38. Officers with 'high reputations...found themselves recalled to India, and in many cases on their arrival were assigned posts of less importance than those which they had held in the field, while they lost the opportunities for earning distinction and gaining promotion which were in their grasp in other theatres of war'. A survey of the war diaries of the Indian Army's Expeditionary Force deployed in Mesopotamia makes the point clearer: Confidential Se. No.44/2006 Notes from War Diaries Part ODXLI Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, General Staff, Army HQ, India, Feb. 1916, Military Department, War Diary, NAI, brings to our notice the extreme shortage of men in the machine gun companies. Even the supply of water posed a big problem. Similarly Secret Se. No. 9/654 Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force (Force D) Notes from War Diaries, Part CXXVIII, General Staff, Army HQs, India, Aug. 1916, Military Department War Diary, NAI, speaks of the shortage of personnel and defective transport. In the 6th Cavalry Brigade Ammunition Column, for instance, in May 1916 out of 92 wheels 40 were instantly condemned and a further 23 were found fit for condemnation in a few weeks. Wagon bodies were in a bad state with their wood being split and broken. There was deficient forage for cavalry and motor ambulances were being demanded because wounded men were being carried on stretchers for miles before receiving proper medical attention. For detailed accounts of the hard fought Mesopotamia campaign see C. C. Trench, *The Indian Army and the King's Enemies*, pp. 75–90. Farwell, *Armies of the Raj*, pp. 253–66. Reginald Hennell, *A Famous Indian Regiment: Kali Panchwin, 1768–1923*, (1927) reprint Delhi 1985, pp. 174–214, is an old-style campaign account of the Marathas in Mesopotamia based on contemporary war despatches.

24. ECR, p. 38.

25. Ibid., p. 39.

26. Ibid., part V, p. 55.

27. Ibid., p. 53. That the fears and predictions of the EC regarding discontent in the armed forces were not baseless becomes clear in the nature of correspondence contained in the Montagu Papers. For instance a letter from Chas. E. Yate to Montagu, dated 24 Nov. 1921, Acc. No. 1934, Montagu Papers [Microfilm], NAI, mentions the fact that Kachin and other troops were requisitioned during the Moplah risings because troops at hand could not be trusted.

28. ECR, p. 56.

29. Royal Message to Rawlinson, 25 Jan. 1920, quoted in Ibid., p. 56.

30. Ibid., p. 57.

31. Ibid., p. 58.

32. Ibid., p. 58.

33. Ibid., pp. 58–9.

34. Ibid., p. 59; The Army in India Committee: Table of Meetings, offers the following list of Indian VCOs consulted as witnesses: Sub. Maj. Lachman Singh 15th Jats, Ris. Maj. Fazil Hussain 13th Lancers, Sub. Maj. Hari Ram 12th Pioneers, Ris. Maj. Prem Singh 20th Deccan Horse, Ris. Maj. Muhammad Akram Khan, 1st Lancers, Sub. Maj. Pertab Singh 36th Sikhs, Subadar Umrao Singh 1/10th Jats, Sub. Maj. Arjun Powar Sappers & Miners and Ris. Maj. Lakput Singh 26 Cavalry. Many of these VCOs submitted papers and memoranda arguing for amelioration of their service conditions, influencing the ECR's view of the matter.

35. ECR, p. 59; D. C. Ellinwood, 'Ethnicity in a Colonial Asian Army: British Policy, War and the Indian Army, 1914–18', in D. C. Ellinwood and Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia*, London, 1981 mentions that experiences in Europe, especially France, enhanced the 'ethnic pride' and self-esteem of Indian soldiers but curiously enough does not credit the VCOs with the ability to protest. In this 'ethnic' perspective the VCOs are described as 'in house elders' who 'having come from a relatively simple society...generally accepted their inferior status without quibble, as far as we can determine'. On the other hand S. D. Pradhan, 'The Sikh Soldier in the First World War', in D. C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (eds), *India and World War I*, New Delhi, 1978, after looking closely at Sikh recruitment and experiences during the War concludes that the War heightened the notion of equality amongst the soldiers bringing to the fore their

grievances against the British who denied them their just dues and rights after the war. T. A.Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822–1922*, London, 1974, p. 103, surveys Sikh unrest under political influence in the army during the Great War period. Restrictions on Indian immigration to Canada had led to noticeable disconcert amongst Sikh troops as early as 1914.

36. Birkenhead Collection [Microfilm], NAI, Acc. No. 1949, 7 Sept. 1927 General Staff Note on Army deficiencies–letter from Irwin to Birkenhead.

37. ECR, p. 59.

38. ECR, p. 59; This was most unfortunate and became the ground for great discord between the British Raj and Indian nationalists in the inter-war period. The shortage of officers was stressed by Lt. Gen. Sir H. V. Cox in the Appendix- Minutes of Second Meeting, 29 July 1919 in the Army in India Committee, Table of Meetings *op. cit.*: Before the War the Indian Army Reserve of officers numbered 40 officers and there was no scheme of training or expansion. During the war the British Army could hardly supply the rapidly expanding Indian Army with officers. This led to a severe crisis in field command because within the first few months of the war, as casualties mounted, the shortage of officers became acute.

39. ECR, p. 65. From Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 122, we know that in 1882 headmasters in Bombay government high schools earned on an average Rs 462 per month and assistant masters got Rs 90. In government middle schools the pay was about Rs 87 and 45 respectively.

40. ECR, p. 66: 'The adoption of these proposals would provide, inter-alia, for the elementary education of the sons of Indian soldiers, who would be sufficiently well grounded to proceed, with the help perhaps of military scholarships, to higher educational institutions'.

41. Ibid., pp. 59–60.

42. Ibid., p. 60.

43. Ibid., p. 62.

44. Ibid., p. 62. The Committee wrongly calculated this as Rs 7.8.

45. Ibid., p. 62. Such expectations were to arise, with strident political manifestation, in vast sections of the armed forces even in 1945–6.

46. The implications of this competition have been researched by Anirudh Deshpande, 'Hopes and Disillusionment: Recruitment, Demobilisation and the Emergence of Discontent in the Indian Armed

Forces after the Second World War', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. XXXIII, no. 2, April–June 1996.

47. ECR, p. 62.

48. Ibid., p. 63.

49. Ibid., p. 63.

50. Ibid., pp. 63–6.

51. Hardinge to Morley, 16 March 1911, in Morley Collection [Microfilm] Acc. No. 1614, NAI.

52. ECR, p. 79. *Marine Regulations, India, VI, Part I : Discipline, Part II : Finance*, Calcutta, 1886, NAI; *Marine Regulations India, VI: Pay and Allowances and Non-Effective Pay, GoI, Finance Department*, Calcutta, 1918; NAI; and the *Marine Regulations, VI, GoI, Marine Department, 1931*, Calcutta, NAI, 1931, failed to note substantial changes. The Jellicoe proposals appear in Appendix 6.1. Significant aspects of the Bombay Marine's history including the politics of marine survey are presented in Anirudh Deshpande, 'The Bombay Marine: Aspects of Maritime History, 1650–1850', *Studies in History*, vol. XI, no. 2, 1995.

53. ECR, p. 79.

54. ECR, pp. 79–80. The reduction in military expenditure with special emphasis on the navy of the East India Company launched by Bentinck and Macaulay was largely responsible for making Indian naval matters completely subservient to the Admiralty much before 1857. For detail see: C. R. Low, *History of the Indian Navy (1613–1863)*, London, 1877, reprint New Delhi, 1983, vols I and II; *Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island*, vol. II, Bombay, 1909; Report of the Calcutta Civil Finance Committee dated 14 June, 1830, in *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 5, Shannon, 1970; Deshpande, 'The Bombay Marine'. At the time Sir John Malcolm had opposed the abolition of the Indian Navy saying that the Navy, managed by Bombay, was crucial in maintaining British domination over the Persian Gulf. He also stressed the point, later made by the ECR, that the Royal Navy would prove expensive to deploy in the Arabian Sea; *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 5. pp. 223–5, Extract from Sir John Malcolm's General Minute of 30 Nov. 1830, and Malcolm's lettrer to villiers, 26 March 1832, in *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. II, Shannon, 1970.

55. *Marine Regulations, India, vol. I, Part I: Discipline. Part II: Finance*, Calcutta, 1886, p. 120, *Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island*, vol. II, Marine section, points out that after 1863 legally only Indian sailors generally from Ratnagiri district were employed by the RIM. Army in India Committee: Table of Meetings, Capt. N. F. J. Wilson,

Director of the RIM, deposing before the EC at its 24th Meeting on 19 Nov. 1919 argued against army control over the service. He also stressed the importance of educating Indians in modern seamanship, improvements in recruitment and service conditions, and the desirability of placing the service under the Admiralty for greater direction and efficiency.

56. *Marine Regulations, India Pay and Allowances, Leave, Passage, Pension and Medical Rules of the Royal Indian Marine, vol. I, All Orders issued upto 31 Dec. 1931, GoI Marine Department, 1931*, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 15–17 for syrangs, tindals, and lascars, Section I, table showing complement of enrolled ratings in 1930. Section 1, pp. 19–22, on ship rates of pay. All ratings received an outfit allowance of Re 1 anna 8 per month which was denied to topasses and *bhandaries* employed as menials.

57. *Marine Regulations, India, vol. I, Pay and Allowances and Non-effective Pay*. All orders issued upto 1 July 1917, GoI, Finance Department, 1918, Calcutta, 1918 (NAI), pp. 10–11. In the afloat establishments, p. 17., the situation in 1917 was as follows: Chief syrangs of lascars 2nd class Rs 45 per month, sukhanies Rs 30 per month, tindals of lascars Rs 25 a month, lascars 1st class Rs 20 a month, lascars 2nd class Rs 16 a month, 3rd class Rs 14 a month, 4th class Rs 12 per month and lascar boys Rs 8 per month.

58. ECR, pp. 56–81. This was, however, not the unanimous opinion of the Committee, for Maj. Gen. Sir A. Bingley in the 33rd Meeting of the ECR (Army in India Committee: Table of Meetings), tersely dismissed Indian maritime traditions in the following words : 'The idea of an Indian Navy is impracticable. The people have no sea traditions or aptitude.'

59. Ibid., pp. 99–100.

60. Ibid., p. 101: Minute by Sir Umar Hayat Khan. The Bengali battalion was raised with great problems towards the end of the War and sent to Mesopotamia where in 1918 it cracked under pressure. This helped the advocates of the 'martial races' theory.

61. Keith Jeffery, 'An English Barrack in the Oriental Seas? India in the Aftermath of the First World War', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1981, pp. 369–86, asserts that the ECR was guided by War Office ambitions of assuming direct control over the Indian Army. Edwin Montagu considered these aspirations 'idiotic' and the GoI, led by Chelmsford, firmly held that since India paid for it 'India must control its own Army.'

62. *India in 1921–22, A Statement prepared for presentation to the Parliament*, p. 14, *A Statement Prepared for Presentation to Parliament*

in Accordance with the Requirements of the 16th Section of the GoI Act [CSL].

63. Ibid.

64. This section is based on the following: GoI Army Department General Staff Branch. Organization Proceedings B, Feb. 1921, nos 2810–31—Views of the GoI on parts I and II of the Report (hereafter ADP Feb. 1921), HS.

65. *India in 1920, A Statement prepared for presentation to the Parliament*, p. 17.

66. *India in 1920, A Statement prepared for presentation to the Parliament*, p. 18.

67. Criticisms by His Excellency the Viceroy on the Secretary of State's control over Military Expenditure in India, 1908 in Morley Collection [Microfilm], Acc. No. 1615. At the time the Secretary of State was accused of 'excessive rigidity' because a sentence in his despatch read that the restrictions on the GoI's power to begin buildings applied also to 'sanctioned measures'. In his reply the Viceroy stated the following: 'The same despatch makes it impossible for us even to build quarters for a subordinate without reference to you if the necessity for quarters arises out of redistribution.'

68. According to the information available from the Army Department Organization Proceedings, Dec. 1923, nos 85–112 the army consumed 50 per cent of central revenues in 1921–2. *India in 1924–5, A Statement prepared for presentation to Parliament*, tells us that in the mid-1920s Indian military spending amounted to more than 20 per cent of net central *and* provincial revenues (about Rs 600 million out of Rs 2200 million). K. N. Reddy, 'Indian Defence Expenditure: 1872–1967', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. VII, no. 4, 1970, points out that between 1900 and 1945 the ratio of Indian defence expenditure to national income remained generally constant, and in our terms, on the higher side. The situation did not change in the 1930s and the Chatfield Committee found that in 1938–9 the defence expenditure of India accounted to half the total revenue collected by the GoI. Lanka Sundaram, *India's Armies and Their Costs*, Bombay, 1946, p. 145, tells us that as late as 1929 the Indian defence budget consumed 45.29 per cent of the total budget of the GoI.

69. *India in 1921–2, A Statement prepared for presentation to the Parliament*, pp. 12–13.

70. ADP Feb. 1921, W. M. Hailey's observations as a member of the Viceroy's council, 15 March 1920, p. 4.

71. Ibid.

72. ADP Feb. 1921, p. 7. Telegram from the Secretary of State for India, No. 2185, 24 June 1920, Proceeding No. 2813.

73. ADP Feb. 1921, p. 7.

74. ADP Feb. 1921, p. 8. Emphasis added.

75. ADP Feb. 1921, p. 9. The manufacturing capacity of Indian ordnance in 1918 was little short of pathetic; K. M. L. Saxena, *A History of the Departments of the Indian Army*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 21, points out that in 1878 there were ten factories and one manufacturing depot in India comprising three gunpowder factories, three gun carriage factories, two small arms ammunition factories, one foundry and shell factory, one harness and saddlery factory and one small manufacturing depot; S. D. Pradhan, 'Indian Army and the First World War', in Ellinwood and Pradhan, India and World War I, mentions seven ordnance factories in India in 1914.

76. ADP Feb. 1921, Munro's observations, p. 11.

77. ADP Feb. 1921, Munro's observations.

78. ADP Feb. 1921, W. H. Vincent's minute of 10 Aug. 1920, pp. 17–18.

79. Ibid.

80. ADP Feb. 1921, Hailey's minute, 16 Aug. 1920, p. 19.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. ADP Feb. 1921: Army Department Separate, Delhi 1921, 3 Feb. 1921—Despatch to the Secretary of State for India from the GoI.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Mowatt Committee, Reduction of Military Expenditure, MSS. Eur. D.573/38, Report of Committee on Special Military Expenditure, 1907 in Morley Collection [Microfilm], Acc. No. 1615, NAI.

88. *Report of the Indian Retrenchment Committee, 1922–3*, Delhi, 1923 [*IRC*], CSL.

89. IRC, p. 7.

90. In the immediate post-War years it was not possible to say that the GoI was certainly going to abandon its 'forward' policy on the frontier in a hurry. The new policy of holding Waziristan was

announced by Lord Chelmsford in 1920 after the conclusion of the third Afghan War in the following words: 'It is not possible to set any limits to the period of our occupation, our main care being that we shall not lose the advantage gained during the past nine months at the cost of valuable lives and of much money'; Ref. *India in 1920, A Statement Prepared for Presentation to the Parliament*, p. 10.

91. IRC, pp. 9–10.

92. In fact, before the IRC the Innes Committee had recommended a reduction from 153 officers to 108 at the army HQ to save 813,000 rupees. The C-in-C had agreed to most of this reduction but, according to the IRC, p. 12, even greater reductions were possible.

93. IRC, p. 37.

94. According to Reddy, 'Indian Defence Expenditure', per capita defence expenditure in money terms remained roughly constant between 1872 and 1900. Between 1900 and 1967 it increased, with periods of large money-term increases being 1911–20, 1941–50, and 1961–7. On the whole, between 1900 and 1945, even as wars pushed up per capita defence expenditure, the percentage of defence expenditure to total state expenditure and the ratio of defence expenditure to national income remained generally constant.

95. IRC, p. 50.

96. Bisheshwar Prasad (ed.), *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, Vol.: The Royal Indian Navy*, New Delhi, 1964, p. 7. This volume was compiled by Lt. D. J. E. Collins of the Indian Navy.

97. Appendix, Case No. 9796—Organization. Attached to the report of despatch of 3 Feb. 1921, no. 10 (Prepared by General Munro, C-in-C), actually a position paper prepared by Munro before he left India, in ADP Feb. 1921.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. MC, 15th meeting, 6 Aug. 1921, MC Proceedings, 1921, File No. 601/10453/H, HS; *Army in India Committee, Table of Meetings*. The fact that the MC was a purely advisory and not executive body was stressed by its makers at the 33rd meeting of the EC d/4 Dec. 1919, though it was understood that decentralizing staff functions in India would soon raise the question of employing more Indians in important positions.

102. MC Proceedings, 1921, 16th meeting 22 Aug. 1921, 17th meeting 29 Aug. 1921, and 19th meeting, 12 Sept. 1921.

103. MC Proceedings, 20th meeting 19 Sept. 1921 and 21st meeting 26 Sept. 1921.

104. MC Proceedings, 24 Oct. 1921.

105. Ibid., and 28th meeting, 19 Dec. 1921.

106. MC Proceedings, 1922, File No. 601/10454/H, 46th meeting–48th meeting, 31 July 1922.

107. Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars*, London, 1972, pp. 11–16, p. 26: Imperial defence policy evolved in tension between Britain, her dominions, and the colonies. London wanted to centralize defence by canalizing the contributions of the colonies and dominions, whereas the latter desired maximum permissible autonomy. The problem of paying for defence however always remained.

108. The Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, telegram no. 113 (Secret) 23 Jan. 1922, File No. 601/10798/H, GoI, Army Department Organization Proceedings, Dec. 1923, nos 85–112, subject: Indianization of the Army, HS.

Appendix 6.1*

Report on the Naval Mission to India: Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Jellicoe's, report to Lord Chelmsford from Bombay, dated 30 April 1919.

General Overview

The naval defence of India was insufficient for modern times for she lacked ships and her harbours were undefended against submarine attack. India had no minesweeping organization and the general and anti-aircraft defence of her ports was very outmoded. India's naval defence, despite the annual subvention of sterling 100,000 paid to the Admiralty by the Government of India and the sterling 300,000 spent on the RIM, was the responsibility of the Royal Navy. Howèver in future, India would have to become more responsible for her naval defence and would begin the process with harbour defence. The formation of a Royal Indian Navy equipped with a squadron of light cruisers and assigned the task of also defending the Persian Gulf in the near future was feasible. It was also desirable to have a Naval Board like the Board of Admiralty in England in India with the head of the Naval Board being a member of the Executive Council of the Governor General in council.

Recommendations

1. The development of naval bases and dockyards.
2. The formation of the RIN as part of the Royal Navy (RN) 'in the strategic sense' but involving Indians and Indian revenues. It was important to enlist the, 'considerable population of India which has been accustomed to the sea

* Appendix 6.1 is based on A.Temple Patterson (ed.), *Publications of the Navy Records Society vol. III The Jellicoe Papers*, vol.II. *The Jellicoe Papers Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe, vol. II, 1916–35*, London, 1968, pp. 298–312, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge.

for generations', in the RIN. Before people who said that Indian seamen could not fight Jellicoe placed three factors requiring remedy: (a) Training and discipline (b) The absence of a long-service system and (c) Low wages. After weighing evidence carefully the following conclusion was reached regarding Indians. 'Generally it may be confidently stated that the balance of opinion is in favour of the capabilities of the Indian native seaman as a fighting asset when well trained and well led'.

3. The service conditions and pay offered by the RIN had to be made attractive to officers of the RN volunteering to serve in the Indian service. Suggested service strength was as follows:

   Seven light cruisers with a combat aeroplane each, three sloops for the Persian Gulf, two or more special river gunboats for Mesopotamia, six submarines and a submarine parent ship, one aircraft carrier and twenty armed escort ships for convoys mounting six-inch AA guns and possibly carrying a fighting aeroplane on board.

Personnel

The RIN would comprise the British , Anglo Indians and Indians for involving Indians in a naval service, considering the tradition of British seafaring, was not, 'by any means an innovation'. Initially the service would be officered by RN volunteers acting as RIN officers but later the transition would take place to an independent corps of officers trained in England. The RIN officers, conversant in Indian languages, would hold the King's Commission and maintain a constant link with the RN and England. Special attention had to be paid to the caste of recruited ratings for whom a long service of twelve years was recommended.

7

The Debate on Indianization 1918–39

Partha Sarathi Gupta

The principal issues that figure in the historiography of the process of Indianization (i.e. opening the officer cadre of the Indian Army to educated Indians and ending British monopoly over it) are well known, and have been traced, from different points of view by a political scientist (Stephen Cohen), a military historian (David Omissi), and a retired British Indian Civil Service (ICS) officer who did a stint in the Defence Department of the Government of India (Philip Mason).[1] There is agreement on the events that occurred, but differences in the analysis of the causal connection between them, and on the assessment of the behaviour of the colonial regime. The known facts are as follows—ever since the Revolt of 1857 the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army (from Second Lieutenant to General) were the exclusive preserve of the British. A category called the Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (VCO) was created by promotion from amongst the Indian Army rank-and-file to act as communicators between the British officer and the jawans. Nationalist demands for throwing open the commissioned ranks to educated Indians (by analogy of the opportunities given to them in imperial services like the ICS) were resisted till the First World War. The political calculations that resulted in the Montford Reforms were also responsible for two token gestures—reserving ten seats at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst for Indians who

could both afford it and clear the entrance examination, as well as the setting up in 1918 of a military college at Indore to train cadets. The Indore experiment, meant as a War-time measure, was abandoned after a year, but the ten vacancies at Sandhurst remained available to suitable candidates, although artillery training (at Woolwich) and air force training (at Cranwell) remained closed to Indians, as were technical branches like Tanks and Signals. In March 1921, some resolutions were introduced in the Indian Central Legislative Assembly (CLA) to try to commit a reluctant Government of India to a phased plan of Indianization, but this was overruled by London next year. A second attempt by the CLA in February 1925 led to the setting up of the 'Indian Sandhurst Committee' under Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Skeen, with a largely Indian membership; it produced a unanimous report, in April 1927, which was again rejected by London. Finally, the political negotiations during the First Round Table Conference (RTC) committed the British government to the establishment of an Indian Military Academy, which started functioning from December 1932. The output of commissioned officers from this academy was not large nor were the officers senior enough to be in any responsible position when the Second World War broke out. Unlike the ICS, where 50–50 parity between British and Indian cadres had been reached by the early 1940s[2], the officer cadre of the Indian Army remained overwhelmingly dominated by the British, when negotiations started between the Raj and Indian political leaders for the demission of British sovereignty in 1946.

Earlier accounts, either because of the non-availability of contemporary sources or an excessive dependence on uncorroborated oral testimony and the memoirs of participants nostalgic about the Raj, have not spelt out in detail the concerns felt both on the Indian and British sides about these changes at every stage of the tussle. There is an element of hindsight about the end of empire in some accounts. Stephen Cohen correctly gave prominence to the resolutions proposed by Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar in March 1921, but his analysis of the parliamentary battle between the Raj and Indian representatives was limited only to that debate. Having emphasised the division in the Indian ranks on that occasion between those who wanted

special favours for the 'martial races' and those who did not, he telescoped developments from 1921 till the outbreak of the War and failed to show, as I propose to do, that a high degree of unity on the Indian side was achieved by floor coordination in the CLA in subsequent debates, during the deliberations of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, the first RIC, and later debates.[3] Philip Mason's account of the views of the Indian Sandhurst Committee is correct on factual details, but that its appointment was a 'turning point' is debatable.[4] Apart from the truism that events are described as turning points only from hindsight, a correct assessment of how the Committee got appointed would require a close scrutiny of its immediate background and aftermath to find out if any great change was contemplated by the Raj in setting it up. Mason has also glossed over the unceremonious shelving of that report by the British government. Another debatable judgement of Mason, made in the context of the inauguration of the Indian Military Academy on 10 December 1932, is 'There really could have been no clearer indication than the IMA that Britain did not mean to stay in India for ever.[5] As we shall see, simultaneously with the setting up of the Indian Military Academy, an 'expert committee' decided to maintain the strength of the British forces in India. Further developments like the Chatfield Committee's report of 1939 and the 'Report on the Post-War Organization of the Indian Army (1944–5)' certainly did not indicate an intention to remove all vestiges of the British military presence.

Omissi's treatment of this issue is free of the Whig teleology and paternalistic bias of Philip Mason, and recognizes that retention of imperial control informed all shifts and modifications in British policy, but he has obfuscated the element of explicit racial prejudice and in some places missed the shades of differences within the imperial bureaucracy or the repercussions of the changes in the political colour of the government in Britain.[6]

No historian or social scientist has so far analysed the nine volumes of the minutes of evidence (some of it confidential) which provided the basis for the report of General Skeen's Committee. Such an analysis (of the questions asked and the answers given), which forms one part of this chapter, reveals many new aspects of the political and social assumptions of the colonial

bureaucracy and the Indian elite who wished to wrest more powers from it. It enables us to test some of the fixed notions of Indian military capabilities which were held on both sides.

If one examines the tug-of-war between a reluctant British government and an articulate and vocal Indian opposition, one is struck by the sense of racial superiority which pervades almost all the sources. After the Great War and the Montford reforms, official India had come a long way from the race prejudice displayed over the Ilbert Bill controversy in the 1880s. On the question of the equality of status between Indians and European colonists in east Africa, the official stand was liberal.[7] In the ICS and judiciary a similar position had come to be accepted, but the symptom of colonial hubris—racial prejudice—found its last refuge in the minds of those who had to take decisions on Indianization. Another chapter in this volume has dealt with the Army in India Committee (The Esher Committee).[8] The diametrically opposed views on the question of Indianization expressed by the two Indian members of the Committee—Sir Krishna Gobinda Gupta and Sir Smar Hayyat Khan (the former supporting Indianization and the latter opposing it in a manner *plus royaliste que le roi*)—would have remained buried in the appendices of that Committee's report, were it not for the fifteen resolutions on the report that were moved in the CLA in March 1921, by Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar, a moderate Liberal from Madras.[9] Two disputed issues emerged from this debate which recur throughout the 1920s and 1930s as arguments for going slow on Indianization. One was the preference of the Raj for throwing open Commissions primarily to persons coming from families that had served in the army for generations; the other was the assumption that under no circumstances could an Indian Commissioned Officer (whether trained at Indore or Sandhurst) ever be given powers of command over a British Solider. Both arguments suited the Raj. The former denied the possibility of developing an esprit de corps among Indians, cutting across ethnic and cultural divisions, and thereby justified the continuance of the Raj for an indefinite future. The latter was an open admission that ultimately the Raj could be legitimized only by the principle of 'Herrenvolk', and that, so far as the army was concerned Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 promising equality and impartiality in admission to offices was a dead letter.

The Constitutional-Political Background

Historians have pointed out that the Montagu Declaration of August 1917 was not meant by the Wartime Coalition Cabinet as a commitment eventually to concede self-government to India. Rather, it was so vaguely worded as to permit different Conservative and Liberal interpretations, and many members of the Cabinet had misgivings about it, including Lord Birkenhead, a future Secretary of State for India.[10] However, I accept here as a postulate the judgement of Judith Brown that the Reforms 'offered Indians substantial access to the Raj's consultative structures in Delhi and the provinces, and in each province both legislative and executive power on an unprecedented scale'.[11] Nationalists in India who welcomed the Montagu Declaration and the subsequent reforms kept aloof from the Non-cooperation movement, but used all the procedures permissible in the CLA to urge the extension of Reforms in a more Liberal direction, not least in military matters.[12] Montagu had noted that this might happen. In his note to the Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence on the financial implications of the Esher Committee report he pointed out that while defence expenditure was the exclusive prerogative of the Governor General in Council under the Reforms Scheme, there was still scope for criticism in the CLA; under rule 46 of legislative business 'discussions of the Budget will commence with a general discussion in which the Assembly will be at liberty to discuss the budget as a whole or any questions of principle involved therein'. While admitting that the Governor-General had powers of certification under section 67(b), Montagu added, 'habitual recourse to it would be out of the question meaning... a real breakdown of the essential character of the Reforms Scheme'. He further added that it was 'almost unthinkable that he should act under this section without obtaining the concurrence of the Executive Council', and 'it [was] improbable that he would be able to carry with him the three Indian members of his Executive Council against the clearly expressed views of the Legislative Assembly.[13]

A scrutiny of the tactics inside the CLA of Indian Liberals, 'Responsivist Co-operators', Congress Swarajists, and independent Muslim members like M. A. Jinnah reveal the way

nationalist India used the Assembly, especially in the period from 1924 to 1927, to shape a liberal interpretation of the Reforms.[14] A simultaneous analysis of corresponding British records shows how the liberal vision of 1917 was soon overshadowed by a Conservative racist outlook, which became noticeable as the Wartime Coalition under Lloyd George disintegrated in September 1922, to be replaced by seven years of Conservative rule, interrupted by an ineffective minority Labour government for nine months in 1924. The nationalist Indian point of view got a favourable hearing when the British government was not dominated by diehard Conservatives. It is also during such interludes (when Montagu was Secretary of State, or Labour was in power) that the racial prejudice of the army authorities was sought to be curbed by Liberal ministers and officials.

There are three phases in this tug-of-war between the Indian side and British officialdom—from the resolutions proposed by Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar in the CLA in March 1921 to the rejection by the British Cabinet a year later of the findings of the sub-committee on Indian military requirements so far as the Indianization of officer cadres was concerned; the second phase opens with another resolution in the CLA (by B. Venkatapati Raju) on 19 February 1925, resulting in the appointment of the Indian Sandhurst Committee under General Skeen, its deliberations and report preparation in 1925–7, and the rejection of the report by the Conservative government in early January 1928; the third stage overlaps with the agitation in India against the Simon Commission, the controversial recommendations of the Commission about making the defence of India a purely imperial responsibility, and ends with the concessions extracted from the British Labour government in January 1931 on the establishment of a military college in India.

Racism in the Officers' Training Corps

Before taking up this three-stage development of the Indo-British argument on military issues, it will be helpful to consider one issue—the exclusion of Indian students in Britain from the Officers' Training Corps (henceforth OTC)—for the insight it

provides on the racist mindset in British military circles.[15] I shall survey the unequal tussle between the Liberals and the die-hards till the first quarter of 1925, and indicate the persistence of this unsavoury issue well into the 1930s later on.

Montagu put up strong notes of dissent against the prejudice displayed both at the War Office and by some senior officials at the India Office. Sir William Meyer, a former member of the Viceroy's Council, reported that in Cambridge he had heard that mixed platoons in the officers' training corps in the University would result in 'large numbers' of English students boycotting it, and he suggested, in vain, that there should be special platoons for Indians, with the argument that they were being trained for the Indian Army. Supporting the policy of the War Office, Sir Arthur Hirtzel (Indian Office) minuted, 'In the last twenty years Indians as a class have become so intensely unpopular at the older Universities that British Undergraduates as a class will not have anything to do with them'.

Montagu, disagreeing, wrote, 'I find it almost impossible to convince myself that racial segregation in the OTC or elsewhere is any use at all'. He hoped that a positive response would be forthcoming after a 'little missionary work, a little attempt to show the English cadets the vast harm that they are doing'.[16] Presumably at Montagu's instructions applications from Indian students for the OTC had already been invited and the shortlist for interview prepared.[17] No further progress was possible, reported the Under-Secretary of State for India, Lord Lytton, whom Montagu had made the Chairman of a Committee (with two Indian members) to investigate this matter.[18] The War office wrote, referring to Scottish universities: 'The idea of Indian students being dressed in kilts, as the infantry of the University [were] dressed, [was], in the opinion of the Council, quite impossible'.[19] This annoyed Lord Lytton, who regretfully reported, after speaking to the Cambridge University Board of Military Studies, that the latter 'were unanimous and emphatic that if Indians were admitted to the OTC, recruiting from English undergraduates would be prejudiced'.[20] After a tour of the British universities Lytton concluded that the ban was quite unjustifiable and a reference to the cabinet might be necessary. His private discussion with War Minister Worthington-Evans was 'very unsatisfactory'. Lytton's point was that the

unfortunate existence of racial prejudice in Britain should not be made an excuse to institutionalize it by letting the War Office regulations continue.

Outside the older universities and Edinburgh there were some British educationists who wanted a change in policy. C. A. MacJune (Bristol University) argued that the War Office attitude was undermining all the work he had been doing by founding an inter-racial club where Indian, Egyptian, and English students were brought into personal contact with each other, adding the obvious argument, 'In view of the present sensitive state of Indian opinion, it seems to me that it is our duty in British universities to eliminate as far as it is at all possible differences between our Indian and English students'.[21] Similarly, Sir Michael Sadler of the University of Leeds (who had recently presided over the Calcutta University Commission) indicated that no problems would arise if the India Office changed its policy.[22]

The Liberal elements in the coalition cabinet were fighting a losing battle against the Conservatives and the 'Old India hands' who dominated the Council of India. The nearest the matter came to being discussed by the Cabinet was on 12 May 1922 in the Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements of the Cabinet Committee on Imperial Defence. Sir Austen Chamberlain, as Chairman, tried to moderate the extremely racist tones of the military representatives. Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (noted for his ruthless policy towards Ireland) even opposed the admission of Indians to Sandhurst or Woolwich arguing that the admission of Indians to the ICS could not serve as a precedent, because army service was different. Soldiers lived in messes, sharing a common lifestyle, which was not true of civilian work experience. On Lytton's complaining about the War Office ban on the OTC, Chamberlain criticized their double standards—if Indian students could join other clubs, the OTC should not be debarred to them. He suggested to Wilson, Chief of Imperial General Staff (hereafter CIGS), that the ban be removed.[23]

The War Office remained adamant. Two years later, during the minority Labour government, a Cambridge undergraduate, Nazir Ahmad, on behalf of the Cambridge Majlis, sent a resolution to the Secretary of State for India requesting a change in policy.

Sydney Olivier, Secretary of State, noted helplessly, 'It is a complete impasse, and, I fear, past praying for. Is it any use to reopen it at present?' Hirtzel advised the minister to drop the matter.[24]

Indian legislators would not let the matter be ignored. On 22 January 1925 Sir Pheroze Sethna successfully moved a resolution in the Council of State requesting the Viceroy to secure the removal of the ban, basing his arguments on the recommendations of the Lytton Committee, emphasizing that Indian students at British Universities should not 'return to this country with a sense of injustice rankling in their hearts', because they were 'the very men who, within the next few years [would] be...principally concerned in the relations between Great Britain and this country.'[25] The report of this debate upset the India Office, which nevertheless remained hesitant to confront the War Office, probably fearing a rebuff. General Cobbe, Secretary to its Military department, noted somewhat disingenuously that the objections came from the Universities (which, as we have seen, was true only of Cambridge and Edinburgh). Some constructive suggestions of S. K. Brown were not taken up.[26] Meanwhile Indian opinion made this issue part of the basic scheme of Indianization recommended by the Committee under General Skeen, to the genesis and work of which I now turn.

The Constitutional Tussle: First Phase

As stated earlier, the first round of the struggle started with a resolution of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar in March 1921 in the CLA on the recommendations of the Esher Committee and ended with the rejection by the British Cabinet of a set of proposals which would have Indianized the commissioned ranks within thirty years. Its details are given in Omissi's account,[27] based mainly on official records. That account can be supplemented by the private correspondence and diary of Lord Rawlinson to indicate the strong racial antipathy felt by him towards his Indian colleagues in the Viceroy's Council, and to illustrate how happy he felt at the rejection of the proposals of the government. From his point of view the rejection could not have taken place at a better moment, because firm government was necessary in the face of Gandhi's call for non co-operation.

Even as Rawlinson put the final touches to the draft proposals for Indianization, he revealed his mind in a letter to the Conservative leader Lord Derby (who, later in the year, after the fall of the Lloyd George ministry, became Secretary of State for War in the Conservative Cabinet). About his Indian colleagues, he wrote, 'They are like a lot of children. They are no more fit to govern themselves than the man in the moon, but they are puffed out with pride and self-aggrandisement. Personally, I am for a White Empire'.[28]

On 10 February 1922 the Cabinet Committee on Indian Military Requirements rejected the proposals sent from India. The attack was led by Lloyd George and Curzon with Montagu remaining a mute spectator.[29] Rawlinson got from Sir Claud Jacob a first-hand account of what transpired at the meeting, and was pleased to note that 'Lloyd George will have no weakening in India; he and Curzon are all against Indianization.'[30]

The Prime Minister's remarks at this Cabinet Committee dashed the hopes of all who had expected the Reforms of 1919 to be the first instalment of Indian self-government to be achieved in gradual stages. When Jacob observed at that Committee meeting that the proposals of the Indian government were based on the assumption 'that India should be ultimately handed over to Indians, and that British rule in India would cease', the Prime Minister replied that there was 'no question of a contemplated withdrawal of the British government from India'. Warming to this theme, the Welsh orator added that despite post-War exhaustion Britain would 'amaze the world' by its strength to defend British rule in India.[31]

The first round had been won by the Raj, and the only tangible Indian gain was the creation of a public school, the Prince of Wales Military College at Dehra Dun to provide training to those wanting to appear for the entrance examination for the ten vacancies at Sandhurst. Another innovation was the creation of eight 'Indianizing units' to which Indian cadets, who had already earned commissions after being trained at Indore or were likely to do so at Sandhurst, would be attached. Indian liberal opinion criticized it as a form of segregation.[32] This remained the settled policy of the Government of India and Whitehall until the situation created by the recommendations of the Skeen Committee in 1927.

The Second Round: The Genesis of the Skeen Committee

Contrary to the hypothesis of Cohen and Omissi that the Indian case was affected by an 'enduring division' between those representing the 'martial races' and those representing people from other areas of India, the records show a unity on the Indian side, which embarrassed the government and made it agree to reopen the issue within three years.

In course of moving a resolution on 4 July 1923 pleading for the implementation of the earlier resolution, Sivaswamy Aiyar deplored the 'halting and unsatisfactory progress' in the matter.[33] The amendment moved by E. Burdon, the Secretary to the Army department, aimed to leave to the Government the initiative on the timing of a fresh representation to London. Non-official members of the CLA (both elected and nominated) implied that Burdon's amendment was an attempt to shelve the issue. Rawlinson insisted that the amendment be put to vote; the government lost by thirty votes to fifty-two. Those in favour included only seven Indians; the rest were officials and European and Anglo-Indian members. Opposing it was a phalanx of Indian members from all regions and covering all religious denominations.

From 1924, when the Swaraj Party secured 41 of the 101 seats to be filled by elections in the CLA and 17 members grouped themselves under the leadership of Jinnah as the Independent Party, a common parliamentary strategy could be devised between the groups on a number of issues. On some matters support was also forthcoming from the Liberals, and the 'Responsivist Co-operators'. This resulted in another confrontation between the Indians and the officials in early 1925 and the formation of the 'Indian Sandhurst Committee' under General Andrew Skeen. The official tactics and the Indian counter-measures on this occasion are instructive and show a swing in favour of the Indian position.

As soon as a member from Madras Presidency, B. Venkatapatiraju, gave notice of a resolution urging that steps be taken to start 'a well-equipped Military College...to train Indians for the Commissioned ranks in the Indian Army Service', and won a place in the ballot for discussion in January 1925,

E. Burdon reacted with a memorandum for Lord Rawlinson. The government, he said,

> did not oppose a similar resolution in 1921; yet they have taken no steps to give effect to that resolution, and judging by recent conclusions of policy, they do not now wish to proceed, at the moment, with the establishment either of an Indian Sandhurst or an Indian Woolwich.

He added,

> There is no doubt that we are to be subjected to continuous pressure on the subject and I do not think we can suitably or effectually meet such pressure by opposing a resolution which (the Assembly will say) we accepted four years ago.

Acceptance of the resolution was out of the question 'as the matter (was) essentially one of high policy in which the deciding voice (was) that of His Majesty's Government'.

Burdon's advice on parliamentary tactics was that instead of straight opposition, the government should 'explain the difficulties in the way of the mover's proposition, but be prepared to compromise 'upon the appointment of a special committee of inquiry'... Burdon had already thought of making Sir Andrew Skeen, Chief of General Staff, Chairman of the Committee. He suggested that 'a sub-committee consisting of two capable Indian members of the main committee, accompanied by an Indian army officer who (had) some knowledge both of Woowich and Sandhurst', should visit Britain, see these institutions and 'then return with minds informed to consider, with the rest of the committee whether it (was) really practicable and really desirable to set up the counterpart of the institutions in India at the present time'.

Previous experience of CLA debates made Burdon think that a debate would not 'secure in the Legislative Assembly a proper appreciation of the issues and the difficulties involved'. He continued, 'We have not only to combat ignorance; we have to combat prejudice as well. In a committee, on the other hand, we can educate the members and to a large extent, make them sink unreasoning prejudice'.[34] As will be seen, by an irony of history, the committee ended up educating the British members (General Skeen and Burdon) and making them shed their prejudices.

How this came about was the result of effectively co-ordinated parliamentary tactics between the Swarajists under Motilal

Nehru and the independent group under Jinnah, a stiffening of Indian resistance consequent on some remarks of Rawlinson, the use of the time allotted for general discussion of the budget for further criticism, the government's failure in behind-the-scenes attempts to detach Jinnah, Sivaswamy Aiyar and Purushottamdas Thakurdas from the opposition, differences within the Viceroy's Council (with even some European members disagreeing with Rawlinson), and the sudden death of Rawlinson on 27 March 1925. It is this sequence of events which I now examine.

The government informed Birkenhead, Secretary of State, about its strategy in the legislature, emphasizing that in its opinion 'uncompromising opposition will almost certainly be misconceived, which will be detrimental to us.[35] During the day-long debate on 19 February, Burdon explained the difficulties in accepting the resolution, but stressed that the government stood committed to encouraging Indians to apply for the ten vacancies at Sandhurst, that the Prince of Wales College at Dehra Dun was proof of its intention to prepare boys for Sandhurst, but that an Indian Sandhurst might not come up to the standards of efficiency required.[36] Pandit Malaviya followed him, and took the nationalist line that the prerequisite of responsible government was the development of defence capability. Citing the example of Japan (a country referred to by many more speakers) he argued that the main training should be given in India. The European representative from Bengal, Colonel Crawford, was heckled by Bipin Chandra Pal, Jinnah, Hari Singh Gour, and others, as he spoke of Indian military potential being confined to the martial races. Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar argued his case in support of the resolution well. Although he had an amendment on the order paper suggesting the appointment of a Committee (which the government would have accepted) he was persuaded not to move it by the other Indian non-official members, who 'were anxious to pin down Government to their acceptance in 1921 of the principle of establishing an Indian Sandhurst.[37] Jinnah, who was frequently interrupted by Rawlinson, urged that a committee be formed with comprehensive terms of reference.

Since the government wanted a committee that would rubber-stamp its preconceived notions, an amendment to this effect was moved by Home Member Sir A. Muddiman.

The Committee was to examine the practicability of setting up an Indian Sandhurst. This motion was lost by fifty-nine votes to thirty-seven, the latter consisting entirely of the official bloc, European members, some nominated members, including three Indians who later became members of the Skeen Committee or gave evidence before it (Captain Hira Singh, a former VCO, Captain Ajab Khan, and Sir Abdul Qaiyyum from the North-West Frontier Province). Then Malaviya proposed an amendment, suggesting a committee which would examine how a military college should be established in India, whether it should supplement or be a substitute for Sandhurst, and 'advise at what rate Indianization of the army shall be accelerated for the purpose of attracting educated Indians to a military career'.

This proposal was passed (fifty-eight votes for and thirty-seven against). Those against the proposal included all who had supported the government amendment, and those in favour included Indian members of all groups.[38] As Burdon, on the losing side, commented, 'The outstanding feature of the discussion was that practically all Indian non-official members took their stand on the fact that the Government of India had, in 1921, accepted in principle, the policy of establishing an Indian Sandhurst.[39]

In this debate, unlike the debate in March 1921, there was little indication of a dividing line between the interests of 'educated Indians' and those of areas from which the Raj sepoys were drawn. Faced with this situation, the Army Secretary tried to assess the positive aspects from the government's point of view in the following way:

> Those who face facts were forced to acknowledge...that further enquiry and careful constructive work by an expert committee would be required.... Government of India themselves recognise that a detailed enquiry may have its advantages, if only as providing material for those who, in 1929, may have to deal with the question of the next step to be taken in the direction of granting responsible government in India.[40]

Burdon's note also showed that he was expecting behind-the-scenes discussion by Rawlinson with Aiyar, Thakurdas, and Jinnah on how to get more and better Indian candidates for Sandhurst and avoid further public debate. He was to be disappointed.

Before the Viceroy's Council could discuss the implications of the debate on 19 February, Rawlinson's speeches in the assembly polarised opinion as between non-official India and official India and its supporters. On 25 February, during discussions on the general budget, Jinnah had seized on some remarks of Rawlinson to say that when the expenditure of the Army department came up for discussion he would 'at once give notice of a censure on the Army department', and 'Then, sir, we shall thrash out this question of the Indianization of the Army once more and I hope that I shall be able to convince this House that the Government deserves absolute condemnation'.[41]

Probably smarting under the defeat of the government on 19 February, Rawlinson told the Viceroy a week later of his intention to inform the legislators during the general discussion on the budget that 'I did not think they would be able to completely Indianize the army, and do without any British officers for 100 years'.[42] In the speech he actually delivered he toned down the time-span to 'many many years', but annoyed members by saying that a national army in India was unattainable 'because India [was] not a nation'. His practical suggestions were that the Prince of Wales College at Dehra Dun be encouraged to continue, the number of places at Sandhurst be increased and 'King George's school' and 'Kitchener College' be established to 'assist the education of the sons of serving and retired soliders'.[43]

In the following week the Council members discussed how to meet the proposed vote of censure, C. A. Innes, Member for Commerce, favoured a committee more along the lines that Muddiman had proposed (though in vain) in the Assembly, but annoyed Rawlinson by criticizing the 'eight-unit scheme'. 'It is hardly too much to say that if we are in earnest about constitutional advance, the question of Indianizing the Army is literally vital. The unit scheme is in my view merely playing with the question'.[44]

Rawlinson was under the impression that Reading liked his speech and that the government in London appreciated it, but the Viceroy expressed his misgivings to the Secretary of State: 'Some of Rawlinson's observations have rather disturbed members of my own Council and are expressed a little more

freely than I myself like'.[45] The upshot was an order-in-council that if a vote of censure was moved, Burdon should indicate that the government was willing to appoint a committee to collect evidence on improving the supply of Indian officer trainees.[46] On 14 March, during discussion on the budget Jinnah moved a cut motion on the demand under the head 'Executive Council'. He elicited a promise from Muddiman for the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry.[47]

Before further developments, major changes occurred among the decision-making personnel. Rawlinson died on 27 March, and Reading went on four months' leave, appointing Lytton, the Governor of Bengal, to officiate; Sir Claude Jacob officiated as Commander-in-Chief, keeping the seat warm for William Birdwood, who happened at that time to be in Britain.

The Skeen Committee: Composition and Activities

In his last order-in-council on the formation of the Committee, on 7 April, just before he left for Britain, Reading showed himself to be less rigid than either Rawlinson or the India Office. The terms of reference of the Committee ignored Malaviya's amendment (which the Assembly had approved), were closer to the earlier government proposal moved by Muddiman, but were not as narrow as Rawlinson's last note which had ignored the possibility of a military college in India.[48] Reading's order combined the text of Rawlinson's minute with that of Muddiman's proposal.[49] That the intense tussle in the legislature and within the Council had had some effect on the government was reflected in the second paragraph of the order: 'The Council retains the intention, previously expressed in correspondence with the Secretary of State, to revive any or all of the larger aspects of army Indianization when a favourable opportunity arises'.[50] This indicated the Government of India's reluctance to surrender to strictures from London as it had been doing since February 1922.

Within two months, the composition of the proposed Committee under Skeen had been finalized by Burdon in consultation with Muddiman and acting Viceroy Lytton, and approved by

Jacob. Other than Burdon and Skeen, the members were Indians with an interest in the subject. In his preliminary list, Burdon kept a balance between the number of supporters and opponents of the government motion, with two from each side of the division list of 19 February (Jinnah and Diwan Ramachandra Rao among opponents, and Captain Hira Singh and Abdul Qaiyyum among supporters).[51] The bias in favour of Punjab and the 'martial races' was seen in the inclusion of Sardar Joginder Singh (a Jat Sikh landowner from Punjab who had been a minister under dyarchy), and Captain Gul Nawaz Khan (a retired VCO from the 18th Lancers). Muddiman suggested strengthening the liberal group by including Pheroze Sethna from the Council of State, and was in favour of including Motilal Nehru as a gesture of co-operation to the Swaraj Party. A representative from Bengal was needed and, at Lytton's personal intervention, that slot was given to Captain Jitendra Nath Banerjea, the younger brother of Sir Surendranath Banerjea, who had made a mark in Calcutta in promoting physical culture and games.[52] Thus the nationalist element in the committee got slightly strengthened, though that was not the avowed objective of the government. To represent the interests and experience of those who had served in the Imperial Cadet Corps created by Lord Curzon,[53] Major Bala Saheb Daffle (17th Rajput Regiment), and, to represent the Indian states, Major Thakur Zorawar Singh, MC (of Bhavnagar state) were inducted as additional members. Both had served in the war, and the last-named (unbeknown to the government) happened to be quite close to the Nehru family. Motilal Nehru's comments about his colleagues, after serving one month on the Skeen Committee are illuminating:

> Abdul Qaiyyum with all his communal leanings is at least a gentleman, and Major Zorawar Singh is a fine type of Rajput soldier, very well educated and thoroughly independent. He has only recently been taken on the Skeen Committee. From the very first day he supported the Indian view, and took the attitude adopted by Jinnah and myself. He held a King's Commission and threw it up in disgust. From this alone you can imagine how valuable a colleague he will prove to Jinnah and me.[54]

The Committee started its work in August 1925, devising procedures, interviewing experts (Shea, the Principal of Mayo

College, Leslie Jones, the Principal of the Prince of Wales College at Dehra Dun, Houghton, and Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar). The following categories of people were sent questionnaires (the figures against each category indicate the number of persons)—VCOs (5), Indian King's Commissioned Officers (KCOs) trained at Indore (11), Indian KCOs trained at Sandhurst (20), the British Commandants of both groups (10), Indian public figures ranging from Swarajists to Liberals (32), leading educationists from institutions like Fergusson College (Pune) and Presidency College (Madras), the provincial governments, and select public figures from the princely states (4).

One group of Indians who took a keen interest in military matters—the Hindu nationalists of Maharashtra like B. S. Moonje, N. C. Kelkar, and M. R. Jayakar—was not sent the questionnaire, perhaps at the instance of Jinnah or Motilal Nehru, whose relations with them were, at that time, rather frosty.[55] Whether the ten vacancies allotted to Indians at Sandhurst were being optimally utilized was examined by interviewing parents of boys who had passed out of Sandhurst as well as those who had failed to make the grade there. Confidential evidence was also taken from cadets under training at Sandhurst.

Evidence before the Indian Sandhurst Committee

What is striking from the minutes of evidence is that Skeen and Burdon were more interested in listening to witnesses being cross-questioned by the Indian members, intervening only to clarify some factual points. The questionnaire had been so framed in such a way as not to exclude consideration both of issues important to the nationalists—the creation of an Indian military college to train officers in all arms, and equality of status between British and Indian officers, and of assumptions of the affected military hierarchy—the propensity of sepoys to obey only British officers, the undesirability of soldiers being placed under the command of an Indian, and the uneven distribution of military capability among different ethnic groups in India.

Most of the evidence was collected, and witnesses living in India were examined, in the winter of 1925–6. This meant that Motilal Nehru could play a constructive part, in tandem with Jinnah, Sethna, Banerjea, and Daffle. By exposing the weaknesses of some imperial assumptions and eliciting data they influenced even the official members of the Committee. Motilal was obliged to disassociate himself from the Inquiry in March 1926, rather reluctantly, as the Congress at its Kanpur session in December 1925 had called for non-involvement in the legislature.[56] The remaining members finished their tasks. One sub-committee (Jinnah, Sethna, and Zorawar Singh) went abroad between April and August 1926, to inspect Sandhurst and military academies in France, the USA, and Canada; another sub-committee (Skeen, Daffle, and Dr Ziauddin Ahmad of Aligarh Muslim University inspected Indian universities and colleges (Bombay, Poona, Madras, Calcutta, Benares Hindu University, and Allahabad).

From the nine volumes of written and oral evidence presented to the Committee by a cross-section of military personnel, civil authorities, and public figures, I shall analyse the treatment of some issues which were shibboleths of the imperial military mindset and some propositions which were the stock-in-trade of nationalists who had been arguing for rapid Indianization. My purpose is to suggest an explanation of why the Report did not reflect a cleavage along racial lines (British versus Indians) by contrast to the Report of the Reforms Inquiry Committee (the Muddiman Report, 1924) where all the Indians (mostly Liberals) had signed a minority report; also to sugggest why the Indian members were not divided along communal and regional lines.

The questionnaires accepted the evolutionary standpoint of the Liberals of the Montford generation, and postulated a partnership between Indian elite groups and the British. Thus, in one question (common to all the groups) apropos of whether Indían Commissioned Officers should have powers of command over British troops, it was stated, 'In your answer you should proceed on the assumption that for some years to come there will remain in the Indian Army British officers holding Kings' Commissions which carries powers of command over British troops.[57]

Indian demands for more seats at Sandhurst and the creation of an Indian Military Academy were often countered (with some exceptions) with suggestions for training an anglicized elite corps of Indian officers who would rise above provincialism and communalism. Such suggestions struck a sympathetic chord with British official members, for that would also be an imperial asset (shades of Macaulay!). Burdon's questions and reactions to the evidence of the Bengali Swarajist leader Tulsi Charan Goswami illustrate this: Goswami was not interested in Sandhurst, but wanted military colleges in different parts of India; he was also critical of the Prince of Wales College for being 'too English', and had deposed in his written evidence that 'the atmosphere of the College is such as would denationalise most of its alumni'.[58]

Burdon—You think that the tendency at Dehra Dun is too much in the direction of making them into British boys?

Goswami—Imitation British boys.

Burdon—Would not such instruction make the boys Indian, that is to say, inspire a real national spirit in them?

Goswami—In that you are successful.

Burdon—That is an important point.

Goswami—They ought to be Indians anyhow, not provincials.

Burdon—How would you do that? The matter of language is important in that connection.

Goswami—I would not eliminate the English language from the curriculum. The English language must be there but education need not necessarily be in English...(Some discussion on the medium of instruction).

Burdon—But the Army in India and certainly the defence of India being an all-India subject, it is desirable to eliminate separate standards as much as possible?

Goswami—You can do that in the Military College or colleges that you establish.

Burdon—But I take it you contemplate that even in the earlier stage of education the maintenance of any provincial tendency should be deprecated.

Goswami—Yes, it should be deprecated. That is the business of the school or university authorities as the case may be.[59]

Jinnah also believed that a period of training abroad in Sandhurst would help cadets get over parochial loyalties and acquire a pan-Indian, non-sectarian perspective. This is illustrated by his

cross-questioning of the Maharashtrian educationist, Dr R. P. Paranjpye, Principal of Fergusson College, Poona. Paranjpye (who was a Cambridge Wrangler) preferred that the basic training of a cadet be at an 'Indian Sandhurst', followed by a spell in England to 'get the polish' of British ways. He added, The Sandhurst I want in India should not have any communal prejudices. The best efforts should be made to remove them.' The following exchange between him and Jinnah speaks for itself:

Jinnah—You say you can do that in India?

Paranjpye—Yes. No man who ever thinks that his religion enters into these matters has any business in the army.

Jinnah—I quite agree with you, but what would be the best method of removing such angularities?... To send them to England for a certain time, or to train them entirely in India and then send them to England for a post-graduate course of six months? Would the latter be sufficient?

Paranjpye—Yes, that would be enough.

Jinnah—At present, we have to admit that there are such things as communalism, provincialism, and even caste-ism. We all want to get rid of them. Now the point is this, that until we build up our own conditions sufficiently strongly, the best method of achieving that object would be to send the boy to England so that...falling into line with the surroundings, environment etc...would help remove these angularities.

Paranjpye—I want our students to do away with caste-ism, as you have called it. They must all be made to live together, and must mess together also. Anybody who is not prepared to do that has no business in the army.

Jinnah—The same thing is being done at Dehra Dun where they have a common mess.

Paranjpye—I understand that the guardians of the students have to sign a declaration that they agree to it.[60]

British witnesses revealing racial superiority were gently cross-examined by the Indian members. All British officers agreed on one point—that Indian boys did well in book-learning, but failed to live up to the standards of leadership set by the British cadets, and were less willing to take risks or to own responsibility. All this could be due to the absence of a public school tradition.[61] This was conceded by most of the Indian interlocutors. But they made the British officers look discomfited when cross-examining them about British 'superiority'.

Motilal Nehru argued with Lieutenant Colonel J. C. Philips (OC 4/15th Punjab regiment) who had insisted 'on the necessity of the Indian officers obtaining the characteristics of the British officers'. Philips said that the British type was a 'pretty successful one' and officers of other nationalities were not that efficient.[62]

Major Zorawar Singh—Is not a gentleman the same all the world over?

Philips—That is rather a difficult point.

Motilal Nehru—You say that you would like the Indians to learn the manners and deportment of British officers. Is there not a corresponding obligation on British offices to learn the manners and deportment of Indians generally? When two people are thrown together, the obligation is mutual, and in this case the idea is ultimately to Indianise the army.

Philips—I had not thought of that.[63]

Another example was the examination of Colonel Walshe, Commandant, Royal Artillery. Skeen began the questioning, asking many technical questions about the nature of training required. Walshe indicated that the facilities in India were limited, and supported the idea of an Indian artillery college like Woolwich (if the latter refused to admit Indians). Instead of the eight-unit scheme he thought that 'it would be much better to spread them (i.e. Indian officers) out over the whole of the Artillery so as to keep a leavening of British officers', and that if that 'leavening' eventually disappeared it 'would be a bad thing in itself'.

When it was Motilal's turn to cross-examine, he asked:

Given the same facilities and the same education, is there any reason why he should be inferior to the British officer?

Walshe—My opinion is that on the average he would not be the equivalent of the British boy, but that in the course of some generations you would have a boy who would be quite as good.

Motilal Nehru— ...What is your experience?...

Walshe—My own experience in that way is based on seeing the Indian officers who had been through Sandhurst...

Motilal Nehru—I can tell you that many of the commanding officers of these young subalterns say that they find them just as good as British officers. You have not seen them in positions of command?

Walshe—No, I do not think anybody has.

Motilal Nehru—So you have not had an opportunity of forming an opinion?

Walshe—No, I think that the average Indian would not be so good as an Englishman. The exception would be all right.
Motilal Nehru—That is your apprehension?
Walshe—Yes.
Motilal Nehru—It is not based on actual experience?
Walshe—No.[64]

Most of the officers opposed to the eight-unit scheme argued that thereby Indian officers would be deprived of what they considered the beneficent effects of mixing with British officers.[65] Some of them, like Lieutenant Colonel Philips, stated that as one of their objections to having an Indian military academy as an alternative to Sandhurst.[66] Colonel S. B. Pope (OC, 4/19th Hyderabad Regiment) stated, 'I have talked it over with a lot of Indian boys with King's Commissions. They have all said the same thing, that they like being in units where they mix with other British officers'.[67]

British officers did not see the contradiction between approving of professional intermingling and reacting in an instinctively hostile manner to the notion of Indians commanding the British. The Indian witnesses, members of the Committee, and some British witnesses did spot this anomaly. A missionary educationist from Burma wrote, 'In other services Indian or Burman officials may have British officials under them. It would therefore be resented if it were different in the army'.[68]

Lieutenant S. B. Sinha Roy argued that if the power of command was not conceded, 'it (would) minimise their influence and respect even amongst Indian troops, because they (would) think that there (were) two classes of King's Commissioned officers and the Indians (were) of lower category'.[69] Roy's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel A. H. McCleverty (OC 1/17th Rajput Regiment) was questioned by Nehru on this point. Motilal quoted from Malleson's *History of the Indian Mutiny* to illustrate that before the Revolt it was not thought an offence for a European soldier to serve under a 'black' commander. McCleverty dismissed this, saying that Malleson was notorious for being inaccurate.[70] Sir John Maynard, with his long experience in the Punjab and sympathies for Indian Liberal nationalists[71] was aware of die-hard British opinion. He tempered his support for the Indian position by saying that people would object if Sandhurst-trained Indians could not

command a regiment 'so long as a single British Subaltern remained in it'. For the Punjabi parent or youth 'the expectation (was) to command Indian troops, not British'.

It was unwise, however, in the event of the holder of the Commission rising above the command of a regiment, to put obstacles in the way of his command of a mixed force.... Presumably, there would be very rigorous selection and the Indian who qualified for a brigade would be an exceptional man.[72]

A practical argument which later carried weight with Birdwood but did not influence Skeen and his Committee, was presented by the Principal of Roorkee Engineering College. Drawing on his experience of the Mesopotamia Campaign of 1915–16 he wrote, 'I am of opinion that the modern British rank and file are averse to serving under any but British officers, and in this point lies the chief difficulty in giving King's Commission carrying full authority to Indians.[73]

The assumption of the imperial authorities that the Indian soldier was accustomed to and would only obey a British 'sahib' was weakened by the five VCOs examined by the Committee. In their written evidence, all of them answered in the negative to whether long-service VCOs felt any indignity at serving under one of their own countrymen much younger than themselves.[74]

One person whose evidence carried weight with the British members of the Committee was Captain Ajab Khan, MLA, who was one of the three who had voted with the government on 19 February 1925 (the other two, Abdul Qaiyyum and Hira Singh were on the Committee). On the question of parity of status between British and Indian KCOs, Khan was at one with the nationalist Indian position. He suggested abolishing the eight-unit scheme with the remark: 'I should like the Indian officers of the Indian regiments to work shoulder to shoulder with their British comrades, because they learn so much for them'.[75] His language was used practically verbatim in the final report which recommended its abolition—'The only means of ensuring successful Indianisation and, concomitantly, the maximum degree attainable of military efficiency, is to allow Indian officers to serve shoulder to shoulder with British officers, each learning from the other, in every unit of the Indian Army'.[76]

I now take up the issue of special preference for the 'martial races', and the alleged communal bias among Indian officers.

The 'martial race' concept had been appropriated by the Indian ranks in northern India. Their personal interests coincided with it, and some of them developed a blind spot on this issue. Lieutenant Nur Mohammad (a VCO Risaldar Major granted King's Commission in 1922, after service in the Great War) was in favour of the 'class system' of recruitment to units, opposed the creation of mixed units, and would give preference to the martial races in the selection of KCOs.[77] When Sir Pheroz Sethna asked about a situation where a person from a non-martial race had been found fit to be a KCO, passing over a 'martial race' candidate, he blurted out, 'I shall look forward to the day his nerve should break.[78] Such a demonstration of prejudice was unlikely to convince the Committee.

The evidence of Honorary Lieutenant Labh Singh (a Dogra with twenty-nine years of service as VCO since 1902, honorary King's Commission in 1922) showed that while a properly trained and accredited 'brown sahib' was regarded as deserving of loyalty as much as a 'white sahib': there was a preference for officers from the martial races. In answer to searching questions from Daffle, Hira Singh, Abdul Qaiyyum, and Zorawar Singh, he said that compared to British officers, Indian officers were 'better judges of our feelings, views, and our festivals', but in the selection of Indian officers he would not like to see preference being given to a bania boy coming from a family with no military tradition over those who (came) from a martial race.[79] Qaiyyum asked whether he favoured ending recruitment for non-martial classes, and got the reply,

> I only think that as the existing vacancies can easily be filled up from the material existing among the martial classes we should not import outsiders. If however, the vacancies are increased I have no objection. I want to safeguard the interests of the men already in the profession'.[80]

Captain Ajab Khan did not believe in the 'martial race' theory, and considered that given proper training any person was fit for a military career.[81] He must have been taken more seriously than the persons quoted above, and outweighed the stand of another pro-government member of the Committee—Abdul Qaiyyum—who frequently gave voice to his partiality for the 'martial races'. To a question from Burdon, Khan categorically opposed making any distinction between the two groups when

selecting KCOs. Qaiyyum referred to families where the men had been opting for military service as a regular habit, thereby losing chances of bettering themselves with training for other professions, and the need for 'a little concession' for that class. Ajab Khan's response was, 'That is quite a different question. People who have served in the Great War must get some concessions.... I would not make any distinction now.[82]

Many British officers were convinced that communal prejudice among Indians would prevent them winning the confidence of the rank and file (e.g. Lieutenant Colonel Rainford-Hannay's written reply).[83] Jinnah pressed for an explanation. On what basis, he asked, had Rainford-Hannay formed his opinion? He answered that he had seen communal riots in 1924.

Jinnah—We are now talking of an Indian officer who has been trained as an officer and the question is whether he would command the confidence of his men. Because you saw people in the street fight is it any ground for your saying that such a man would not command the confidence of his men?

Rainsford-Hannay—I think so, I dare say I am wrong, but right or wrong, that is my opinion.

Jinnah—You can give no instance of any kind? You say you surmise, because you saw the riots?

Rainsford-Hannay—Exactly.[84]

Jinnah put Lieutenant General Sir John Shea (Adjutant General of India) also in a tight corner. Shea had averred that the British officer was more trusted by a Muslim VCO than a Hindu VCO, but to Jinnah's question, 'Can you give an example?', he could not.[85]

On this point the opinion of the VCOs was obviously more important. Lieutenant Labh Singh was called in again for a confidential oral examination, when Skeen asked him to comment on the view of one witness that in matters of promotion Indian ranks doubted whether Indian KCOs would be impartial. Labh Singh replied, 'Even if my own brother was a junior and a Mohammedan a senior I would recommend the senior man for promotion, and with a King's Commissioned Officer who belongs to a good family and who has had higher training, it is not possible that there should be any partiality.[86]

Jinnah asked Subedar Mir Dost (an Afridi with twenty-six years of service, made VCO in August 1916) whether Muslims,

Sikhs, and Dogras considered the communal and religious affiliations of their officers, and differentiated between them on that criterion. He got this reply:

> No, if a Pathan King's Commissioned Officer commands a Dogra regiment, they will never think of that, and if a King's Commissioned Officer is a Dogra or a Rajput, a Muslim or a Bengali, the men will obey him as they do any British Officer.... Because he is honoured by His Majesty the King Emperor George V we have to look to his Commission, to his insignia of honour and not to the nationality of the officer himself.[87]

Burdon asked Captain Ajab Khan whether an efficiently-trained Arora officer would be successful as a KCO in a Punjabi Mohammedan company. Ajab Khan replied,

> When the Punjabi Mohammedan Company is brought up to that standard of social education I think there will be no objection. But you will have to be guided by the prevailing conditions for some time, and that will militate against this liberalization for some time.... When all these prejudices die out, there will be no difficulty.

Burdon put to him that prejudices disappear slowly, and what would his reaction be if a fit person from a different community was available?

> Ajab Khan—Personally, I have no objection against that sort of thing. In the civil department we see a Hindu officer administering the same law to a Mohammedan and Hindu alike. There is, however, some prejudice in the army, but it will die out after some time.
>
> Motilal Nehru—Can we begin the experiment now?
>
> Ajab Khan—Yes.
>
> Burdon—If he can pass the examination he should not be disqualified.
>
> Ajab Khan—He should not be disqualified. You will find some difficulty at start, but it will disappear. Public opinion is changing.
>
> Burdon—Do you think public opinion is changing?
>
> Ajab Khan—Yes.
>
> Burdon—You yourself would be prepared to influence public opinion in the direction of obliterating all distinction?
>
> Ajab Khan—Yes.[88]

Burdon questioned H. W. Hogg, the Provincial Secretary of the Punjab Boy Scouts, about the degree of cross-communal fraternization, and got the answer:

There is no communal feeling in the Boy Scouts Camps so far as Hindus and Mohammedans are concerned. In all the camps I have handled, in some of which there were as many as 3000 boys under canvas, and where, in some cases Hindus and Mohammedans were occupying the same tent, I cannot think of one case in which I had to punish a boy for quarrelling about his religion.[89]

The examples cited show that between them Indian Committee members were able to counter the scepticism of the Raj regarding the development of a cross-communal esprit de corps among Indian officers, and the availability of officer-grade persons outside the 'martial races' of northern India. The Raj was likely to get a larger number of collaborators in the military sphere from among the educated classes if racial prejudice was shed. The report of the 'Indian Sandhurst Committee' broke the log-jam in policy formulation on the army in India, as is evident from its principal recommendations.

The Committee recommended raising the number of seats allotted to Indians at Sandhurst from ten to twenty in 1928, and thereafter progressively increasing it, until a military college on the lines of Sandhurst was established in India. Indians were also to be eligible for employment as KCOs in the Artillery, Engineering, Signals, Tank, and Air branches of the army. Eight vacancies for Indians were to be allotted at the College of Artillery at Woolwich, and two at the RAF College at Cranwell. These numbers were to be progressively increased in due proportion. An Indian military college on the model of Sandhurst was to start functioning from 1933 with an initial establishment of 100 cadets doing a three-year course, and this establishment was to be increased steadily. Successful cadets would get the King's Commission and complete their initial training in Britain. Even after the opening of the Indian Military College, twenty vacancies should remain reserved for Indians at Sandhurst to 'secure the maintenance of the Imperial connection in military matters'. The Committee visualized that if its proposals were implemented half the total cadre of officers of the Indian Army would be Indian in 1952.[90]

Subsidiary recommendations aimed to augment the establishment of the Prince of the Wales College at Dehra Dun as a preparatory school for Sandhurst and the proposed Indian Military Academy, get Indian universities to recognize its

terminal examination as being equivalent to university matriculation,[91] simplify the elaborate bureaucratic procedure which had hitherto discouraged candidates from applying for the Sandhurst entrance examination[92], and ensure that 'no preference (was) given to any particular class or communities.[93]

There was no minority report, but the slightly more radical members of the Committee demurred at the suggestion that only in 1952 would the 50–50 proportion be attained as between Indian and British officers. This difference was recorded in the Report (para. 21), where Skeen's argument was that by 1944 the present Indian KCOs would have completed twenty-six years of service and become eligible for the command of a regiment, which was the crucial test. Jinnah, Ramachandra Rao, and Zorawar Singh preferred advancing the date of achieving parity to fifteen years, Sethna and Daffle to twenty years.

The Indians who fell in line with Skeen and Burdon were a motley group, a Sikh (Joginder Singh), a Pathan (Abdul Qaiyyum), a Punjabi Muslim (Haji Gul Nawaz Khan), a pro-government MLA with an army background (Captain Hira Singh), and a Bengali with war-service experience and 'moderate' political affiliations (Captain Banerjee).[94]

The striking feature of the Report was its radical perspective on the question of Indianization. Unlike Rawlinson's speech of 7 March 1925, and the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Report) five years later, both of which dismissed the possibility of a national identity emerging in India, this Report recognized and approved the nation-building possibility of Indianization and saw no contradiction between that and the maintenance of British imperial links. Borrowing from the Jinnah Paranjpye discussion quoted earlier, the Report stated,

> The Indianization of the Army as it is at present proceeding is likely to have the excellent result of further mitigating the differences of caste and creed. The difficulties arising out of caste restrictions and difference of religious belief have been overcome with marked success in the Dehra Dun College where the boys are specifically prepared for the social and commensual side of life in the army.

Further on in the Report, with an oblique reference to the Burdon-Goswami dialogue quoted earlier, it was stated that 'the first step should be the expansion of Dehra Dun rather than the establishment of other small schools of the same kind, because

we find that the existing Dehra Dun College has rendered valuable service, amongst other things, in diminishing inter-provincial differences and fostering unity of sentiment such as is indispensable in a national army'.[95]

The catchment area for recruiting officers was widened, and the martial race lobby did not get more than a small concession in the form of scholarships. 'We believe good potential material to exist which the efforts of the government have not yet succeeded in reaching'.[96] After stating that the basis of selection should be wide the Report added, 'We mean, inter alia, that the preference for soldiers' sons, as a class, which is a feature of the present system of selection, should in future be the exception rather than the rule'.

To convince the other side, it quoted in extenso a speech of the redoubtable Punjab civilian Malcolm Hailey, where he had said.

> I have seen many men among the professional classes who would, in my opinion, make good officers, and I do not doubt that after a time the private soldier will himself prefer to be led by a good man on whose guidance he can trust, whatever may have been his family origin.[97]

Abdul Qaiyyum, in spite of all the leading questions in favour of the 'martial races' he had asked the witnesses, had evidently lost out in the discussions in the Committee, for his signature was also appended to the Report, which said,

> We too have heard the view expressed—it may be regarded to some extent as the natural view of vested interest that Indian officers should be drawn from the so-called martial classes alone; but on the other hand, there are some Indian officers in the army already who belong to the professional classes, and these have so far proved to be not only efficient, but also, we are told acceptable to the men.[98]

Concessions for families with a military tradition took the form of a promotion scheme for VCOs to the rank of KCOs after the military College in India was established. Besides, in the scheme of scholarships to deserving entrants to the proposed College, 50 per cent were to be given to the sons of soldiers after a means test. (The remaining 50 per cent would be distributed according to the merit list of the entrance examination.)[99]

The Indo-Brish racial barrier was sought to be lowered by three proposals—a strong plea to end the ban on Indian students in Britain joining the OTC, the abandonment of the eight-unit

scheme, and equality of status in the power of command. On this last point the Report stated 'Indian officers, if they are to pull their weight in the Army in India, must be empowered, like their British comrades, to take command of other British officers junior to themselves and take command of mixed bodies of troops.[100]

One radical suggestion—that British boys should also be eligible at the Indian Military Academy—had been made by Jinnah, Motilal, and Banerjee to Dr Paranjpye, who, however, was doubtful about British parents agreeing to it.[101] The idea had appealed to Skeen and in the Report it was suggested as desirable,

> British boys who wished to enter the Indian Army should, if they were willing be permitted to receive their military training at the Indian Military College. Here again the association of boys of the two races would be advantageous. We know there are difficulties in the way, but nevertheless we recommend that the door of the Indian Military College should be kept open to British Cadets, and that those who are able to overcome the difficulties we have in mind, should be heartily welcomed.[102]

[Here ended Dr Gupta's handwritten 'fair copy', as written till the evening of 9 August 1999. He passed away on the morning of 10 August. The following has been transcribed from a first draft by Dr Gupta, where notes were not indicated—Narayani Gupta.]

The Conservative backlash against the Report, in India and Britain, began almost as soon as it was submitted. It is recorded in Birkenhead's personal reaction on receiving an advance copy of the Report early in 1927, in the Memorandum submitted to Birdwood by the principal staff officers in May of the same year, in the official writings of Birdwood and the European members of the Viceroy's Council between June and August, and even more pronouncedly in the discussions in the British Cabinet Committee of Imperial Defence in November and December. The net result of these reactions was to consign the Report to cold storage. It remained politically significant only as providing a solid basis for nationalists to argue their case, when opportunity came later, during the First Round Table Conference.

At the same time as the Report was doing the rounds in official circles, Lord Irwin had started his correspondence with

Birkenhead about the personnel of the Statutory Commission to review the Indian constitution which was scheduled for 1929, but the date of which Birkenhead wished to fix earlier, in case his party was not in office then.

Indian legislators concentrated on the point that the Report was unanimous, and that it had set a notional date (1952) for ensuring racial parity in the officer cadre, had supported the training of Indians in all arms, and set the target date of 1933 for starting the Indian Military College. After Motilal Nehru had resigned from the Committee, he was in sympathy with this perspective, for as late as the Congress session of 1928 he, along with Gandhi, was supporting 'Dominion Status' as the goal of the Congress, against vociferous demands for 'complete independence' supported by younger radical members.

However, the optimism of the Liberal and the Congress members of Motilal Nehru's generation was misplaced. The reactions to the Skeen Report in Indian military circles was adverse, and the language in which the British Cabinet Committee of Imperial Defence treated the issue showed racial arrogance.

The political philosophy implicit in the Report was the nationalist ideology of the Indian liberals, an optimism about creating an all-Indian national constitutional polity in which the same relationship on foreign affairs and military matters would operate as existed between Britain and her Old Dominions. The success of constitutionalists like Jinnah and Sethna in securing the agreement of Skeen and Burdon indicated that within the imperial bureaucracy there were persons who shared that optimism. That is not surprising, because, as we have seen, while preparing for the Committee, Burdon, Muddiman, and Innes did express the view that this Committee's findings should be of use to the Statutory Commission in 1929.

Conclusion

written by Anirudh Deshpande

(Based on A. Deshpande 'Dusky Warriors and Affirmative Action: The Politics of Indianization'. Research in Progress Papers 'History and Society', Centre for Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, presented in 1998.)

Although the submission of the Skeen Committee Report in 1927 did not produce spectacular results, a policy declaration, as usual, followed it. The Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C), Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood announced the revised policy of Indianization incorporating some recommendations of the Skeen Committee in March 1928. Twenty vacancies were reserved at Sandhurst for Indians and five were specially opened for selected VCOs. Six seats were reserved at the artillery college in Woolwich and six at the RAF college in Cranwell. Further progress, it was repeated with familiar arrogance, would depend upon the results of these new concessions. The Government of India also expressed its unwillingness to abandon the much-maligned eight unit scheme which was to be given 'full and fair trial'. This was obviously resented by Indians who had always criticized the scheme on the grounds of segregation. The government was apparently willing to disappoint the Indians more and hence it was maintained that, upon supply outstripping demand in these units, Indian officers would begin replacing VCOs as platoon commanders to form homogeneous units on the British model. This most unwise declaration confirmed the suspicions of Indians who had felt all along that the British were never serious about Indianization. The declaration of 1928 meant clearly that the Indianizing eight units would form a 'segregated' Indian Army alongside the British-led Indian regiments. Hence a decade after 1918 the main issues of Indianization remained unaddressed and the unit scheme in practice raised more questions before the sceptics. What would happen when Indian commissioned officers reached higher positions of command in the Indianizing units? How would they be ranked beside senior officers of regular units? Would the Indianized units be trusted in the event of war? Would Indian officers relish the idea of replacing VCOs in the event of British subalterns not doing so in other units of the Indian Army? And what about the VCOs and jawans? The VCOs would certainly dislike being displaced by their seniors and the jawans would hate the prospect of losing promotion opportunities. The short-sighted British policy on Indianization did not answer these questions even in 1928 and, to Indians, this confirmed the dishonesty of the Raj. It seemed that the liberal project envisaged by the Montford declarations

stood finally overruled by a conservative official consensus on Indianization.

The atmosphere was also vitiated by the senseless pronouncements made by the government which, for instance, suggested that there was no need to recruit VCOs in the Indianizing units. This insensitivity towards educated Indians was based on the racist presumption that desperate Indian subalterns would not mind replacing their class and service subordinates. But, by far the biggest blow to Indian aspirations was the turning down of the demand for an Indian Sandhurst. This thwarted the Indian hope of achieving a quickly accelerating Indianization in the near future. The disappointed Indians protested in the Assembly, and Jinnah's adjournment motion was carried by 70 to 41 votes soon after Birdwood's announcement. This highlighted the longevity of Indian support, underlined by Dr Gupta above, for effective Indianization.

Matters would have stagnated but for the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Round Table Conference of 1931. Once again, under intense Indian pressure, some decisions were taken by the Sub-Committee of Defence (No. VII) set up by the Conference of 1931. Among the members of this Committee, and the Indian delegates to the Conference, were T. B. Sapru, M. R. Jayakar, B. S. Moonje, and M. A. Jinnah. The Indians put up a united front on Indianization once again and consequently the 'definite resolutions' of the Committee vehemently demanded steps 'to increase substantially the rate of Indianizing the Indian Army'. However, Jinnah, the veteran campaigner for Indianization, found this resolution too general and instead wanted to see a clear picture of the pace of Indianization. The Sub-Committee also called for the establishment of a training college in India as soon as possible. The Government of India was asked to appoint a committee of British and Indian experts to 'work out the details of the establishment of such a college'. The Sub-Committee was also 'unanimous' in its view 'that the declaration must not be taken as a mere pious expression or opinion' but immediately after the Conference 'steps should be taken to deal effectively with the recommendations made'.

As a result of the initiatives shown at the Round Table Conference in 1931, a Committee of Experts led by the C-in-C

General Sir Phillip Chetwode was set up in May 1931. Almost four years had passed since the Skeen Committee had submitted its report. The task of this new Committee was 'to work out the details of the establishment of a military college in India to train candidates for commissions in all arms of Indian Defence Service.' Indianization was now supposed to extend to a complete division of all arms and a cavalry brigade with proportionate provisions for ancillary services and staff, etc. This experiment would require an intake of sixty officers per year. Realizing that the eight units 'were not popular with either the Indian public or the young Indian officer' for the first time, ostensibly, ' a real start with an Indian Army as a fighting proposition, and not merely an experiment' was being made. In the upshot this announcement was as bad as the declaration of 1928. The reference to the eight units as a mere experiment confirmed the worst fears of the Indians and the new 'divisional scheme' appeared nothing but an enlarged version of the experiment it was supposed to replace. The disheartened Indians protested once again and six Indian unofficial members of the Chetwode Committee submitted 'dissertations' of dissent appended to the main Committee report.

The Indian Military Academy (IMA) opened in 1932 largely to serve the divisional scheme outlined by Chetwode. But this never satisfied those Indians who were aware of the fact that the Indian Army was financed by Indian revenues and to whom therefore Indianization had meant the speedy replacement of British officers with Indians on a substantial scale. Following such reasoning an expert, Lieutenant General Gautam Sharma, has recently called the setting up of the Indian Military Academy in 1932 ' a very carefully worked out deception plan which did not deceive anyone'. This was so because, first, Indian officers graduating from the Indian Military Academy began to replace the VCOs in the units selected by the divisional scheme. Second, this did not amount to the acceleration of Indianization and the replacement of British KCOs with Indian officers across the board. Third since the divisional scheme was an expanded version of the unit scheme, the Indians rightly called it a scheme of discrimination and segregation. The divisional scheme remained in force till the Second World War forced the British to grant commissions to Indians on a much larger scale. However

most of these new commissions were temporary and dictated by the emergency situation and despite these emergency commissions the Indian armed forces continued to suffer a shortage of suitably trained officers in general. In sum this was a result of the myopic policy on Indianization followed during the decades between the two World Wars.

Endnotes

1. S. P. Cohen, *The Indian Army, Its Contribution to the Development of the Indian Nation*, University of California Press, 1971; P. Mason; *A Matter of Honour, An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men*, Cape, London, 1974. D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: the Indian Army, 1860–1940*, Macmillan, London, 1994.

2. D. Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919–83*, Oxford, 1986.

3. Cohen, *The Indian Army*, pp. 78–87.

4. Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 463.

5. Ibid, p. 466.

6. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, Ch. 5 passim.

7. P. S. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914–64*, London, 1975, pp. 1980–2.

8. Chapter 6 in this volume.

9. Cohen, *The Indian Army*, pp. 78–82.

10. J. R. Danzig, 'The Many-Layered Cake: A Case Study in the Reform of the Indian Empire', *Modern Asian Studies 3* (1969), pp. 57–74.

11. J. M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 19.

12. These constitutional nationalists have been neglected by historians. John Gallagher, however, perceives correctly that they were much the more important during the nineteen twenties; J. Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and the Fall of the British Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 101.

13. Cab 6/4, Paper no. 117-D (also numbered among Cabinet papers as CP 2267), Public Record Office, London. The quotations are from para. 6 and of the memorandum.

14. David Page has correctly drawn attention to the emergence of this type of cooperation among members of the CLA although

the focus of his book is on the formation of local provincial identities, D. Page, *Prelude to Partition*, OUP Delhi, 1982, pp. 107–18.

15. Omissi has blandly stated the fact of their exclusion, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 165, but not developed and described the political fallout.

16. Notes by Hirtzel and Montagu. 25 Nov. 1920. Only a junior official, S. K. Brown supported the minister and suggested that the 'socially mixable type of Indian students should be welcomed to join the OTC, Indian Office Records, London (hereafter IOR), L/MIL/7/19033, M. Coll, 430/29, pt. I.

17. The shortlist included a Cambridge undergraduate called Subhas Chandra Bose, against whose name, as a plus point, it was noted that the he had just got through the ICS examination. The rest is history. He was to prove his potential as a military leader in a very different capacity twenty-three years later. (IOR, L/MIL/7/19033, File 13713 of 1920.)

18. The Indian members were Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikary, a former Vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, and Aftab Ahmad Khan.

19. H. I. Cready to Under Secretary of State 28 April, 1921. IOR L/MIL/7/19033, M. Coll 430/24, pt. I.

20. Lytton thought that there were only two alternatives, either to raise the matter in the Cabinet or to accept a separate Indian platoon in the OTC. He would have preferred the former, but wanted prior discussion with Montagu. There is no record as to whether that discussion if it at all took place. IOR L/MIL/7/19033, M. Coll 430/24, pt. I, File no. 12975, Lytton's minutes of 6 July 1921 and 21 July 1921.

21. He added that in Bristol University the oriental students were 'not embryo politicians as in Oxford', but mostly engineers, and the person who was refused admission to the local OTC was a medical student. C. A. MacJune to Sir M. Seton at the India Office, 2 Nov. 1921 IOR, L/MIL/7/19033, M. Coll 430/24, pt. I, file M 7295 of 1921.

22. Sadler's remarks to Dr D. N. Malik, file M 2376 of 1922 in IOR, L/MIL/7/19033, M. Coll 430/24, pt. I.

23. Cab 16/38/1, Committee of Imperial Defence, Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirement, Minutes of meeting, 12 Jan. 1922.

24. Olivier's minutes, 8 July 1924 IOR L/MIL/7/19033, file M 3966 of 1924. This illiberalism was due not just to official inertia but to fresh reports of racial prejudice in Edinburgh University (vide correspondence between Col. Wilson Johnston of the India Office and EGL Thurlow and General Braithwaite of the Scottish Command Headquarters; IOR, L/MIL/7/19034, file M. 5871/131).

25. Council of State Debates, fifth session, 1925, vol. V, pp. 36, 39.

26. These reactions can be found in IOR, L/MIL/7/19034, K. 480 of 1925.

27. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp. 168–72.

28. Rawlinson to Derby, 26 June 1922 (Derby Papers, Box 33, Liverpool City Library).

29. Cab 16/38, IMR 9th Meeting.

30. Rawlinson's Diary, entry for 19 Feb. 1922 (National Army Museum, London).

31. Cab 16/38/ICID, IMR nineth Meeting, 10 Feb. 1922.

32. For the Eight units scheme, see Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp. 173–5.

33. Central Legislative Assembly Debates (hereafter CIA), 4 July 1923, pp. 4270–4301. Rawlinson's intervention is on p. 4299 f, for the division list, see pp. 4300–1.

34. This extended paraphrase, with quotations, of Burdon's memorandum of 18 Jan. 1925, is among the 'Keep-with's of the Army Department, Organisation Branch, Mar 1927, Proceedings A 333–41 National Archives of India, New Delhi (hereafter NAI).

35. Telegram to Secretary of State, 24 Jan. 1925 (Ibid).

36. CLA Debates, vol. V, part II, pp. 1225–31.

37. This was Burdon's phrase in his post-mortem note on the debate, 4 March, 1925. According to his information, Aiyar was under heavy pressure from other Indian members. ('Keep-withs', Army Department, proceedings A 333–41.)

38. The full debate is in CLA Debates, vol. V, part II, pp. 1220–73. Muddiman's amendment is on p. 1260, Malaviya's on p. 1266, and the division list on pp. 1270–3.

39. Para 2 of the note by Burdon, 4 March 1925, 'Keep-withs', Army Department Proceedings A 333–41.

40. Ibid. The quotations are from paras 5 and 6 of Burdon's note.

41. CLA Debates, vol. V, part II, p. 1961.

42. Rawlinson's diary, entry for 7 March 1925.

43. CLA Debates, vol. V, part II, p. 1954.

44. Note by A. Innes, 7 March 1925, agreed with by Muddiman and Habibullah. ('Keep-withs' Army Department, Proceedings A 333–41). Rawlinson had written perceptively, before the matter came up

in Council, 'Sarma is sure to be against. Innes inclined not to be supportive. Unsure about Muddiman and Habibullah. Mitra will, I think, be on my side'. Diary entry, 7 March 1925.

45. Reading to Birkenhead, 12 March 1925, Reading Papers, microfilm in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (hereafter NMML), Roll no. 2.

46. Order-in-Council, 11 March 1925, signed by Reading on p. 6, of the Keep-withs in Army Department, Proceedings A 333–41.

47. Rawlinson's last note, dated 7 March 1925, when the file was being circulated among the members of the council, read as follows. '[He was] quite prepared to accept the appointment of a committee of limited scope in order mainly to collect evidence regarding the supply of young Indians for the army, and the best means of giving them their military education.' He thus wanted to deflect attention from the creation of an Indian military academy. (Note by Rawlinson, 7 March 1925, in Keep-withs, Army Department, Proceedings A 333–41.)

48. The operative part of the order-in-council is as follows: '[a committee] including Indian members of the Legislature, be appointed to investigate and report

(a) by what means it is possible to improve upon the present supply of Indian candidates for the King's Commission both in regard to number and quality.

(b) Whether it is not desirable and practicable to establish a military college in India to train Indian officers for the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army.

(c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, how soon should the scheme be initiated and what steps should be taken to carry it out.

(d) Whether if a military college is established in India it should supersede or be supplemented by Sandhurst and Woolwich so far as the training of Indian officers is concerned.' It is evident that (a) was the essence of Rawlinson's Minute, and (b), (c), and (d) were clauses (a), (b), and (c) of Muddiman's proposal in the Assembly, Army Department, Proceedings A 333–41.

49. Ibid.

50. Burdon's note, 6 May 1925, in Keep-withs of Army Department, Proceedings 333–41, Hereafter I use the term 'pro-government' members' for Qāiyyum and Hira Singh when the work of the Indian Sandhurst Committee is discussed.

51. J. N. Banerjea (1860–1935) had been interested in body-building, gymnastics, and wrestling since his boyhood. He qualified as

a Barrister and practised in the Calcutta High Court. He enrolled (1906) in the ranks of the Presidency battalion and rose to be Captain (1915) during the War. He was a recipient of the Volunteer Long Service Medal and the War Badge. In 1927 he founded the All Bengal Physical Culture Association.

In the file put up by Burdon (ibid.), Lytton noted on 8 May 1925, 'The man whom I was in the habit of consulting in all matters connected with the military training of young men was Capt. Banerji.'

52. On this, see G. S. Sundaram, 'Preventing Idleness', The Maharaja of Cooch Behar's Proposal for Officer Commission in British Army for the Sons of Indian Princesss and Gentleman, 1897–8,' South Asia, n.s., vol. 18, no. 1 (June 1995), p. 128.

53. M. L. Nehru to J. L. Nehru, 14 Sept. 1928 (M. L. Nehru Papers, File JN, xii, NMML).

54. D. Page *Prelude to Partition*, p. 127.

55. A. M. Zaidi (ed.) Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress 1885–1985 (New Delhi, 1976), vol. IX, p. 71, Motilal's reluctance is reflected in his letter to his son, 'I do think I was a bit hasty', (M. L. Nehru to J. L. Nehru, 11 March 1926, M. L. Nehru Papers, File JN, xiii), NMML. An earlier letter (26 Feb. 1926) indicates that he was slated to be part of the sub-committee that would have visited Europe in April.

56. Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee (Records of the Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi), vol. III, part I, pp. 1–3, Q no. 16; vol. IV, vol. IX, p. 10.

57. Goswami's written evidence is in ibid., vol. III, part ii, pp. 46–7, and his oral testimony in vol. VIII, part II, pp. 85–9. The quotation is from the latter.

58. Ibid., vol. VII, part II, p. 89.

59. Ibid., vol. VIII, pp. 259–60.

60. Evidence of Rainsford-Hannay, J. Phillips, ibid., vol. IX, pp. 66, 84 ff.

61. Ibid., vol. V, pp. 195–6.

62. Ibid., pp. 196–7.

63. Ibid., p. 101 (the examination took place on 3 Feb. 1926).

64. Evidence of Lt. Col. J. Phillips, Maj. J. S. Mowat, and Col. Pope, ibid., pp. 66–8, 92–3, and 199.

65. Ibid., vol. IX, p. 66.

66. Ibid., p. 199.

67. Evidence of Rev. A. H. Blenlowe, Principal, St. John's College, Rangoon, (ibid., vol. IV, p. 49).

68. Ibid., vol. IX, p. 143.

69. Ibid., vol. X, p. 84f.

70. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*.

71. Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, vol. IV, pp. 20–7.

72. Ibid., vol. v, p. 20. This point was reiterated by Commander-in-Chief Birdwood in his critical note on the report of the Committee. 'We must face the fact that British troops cannot be made liable to serve under Indian commanders. British troops have never been accustomed to serving under foreign officers.' Note on 25 May 1927, para. 17. Member G. Rainy supported him, Keep-withs, Army Department, Proceedings A 333–41, June 1928, pp. 189–92.

73. Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee , vol. IX (Evidence of Shamsher Ali Khan, Malik Mehr Khan, Abdur Rahman Khan, Muhammad Saraf, and Hukmat Khan.

74. Ibid., vol. VII, part 1, p. 2; testimony on 17 Dec. 1925.

75. Ibid., vol. I, p. 19.

76. Ibid., vol. VII, part 1, pp. 155–68, testimony on 9 Jan. 1926.

77. Ibid., p. 167.

78. Ibid., pp. 174, 177.

79. Ibid., p. 177.

80. Answering Ramachandra Rao, he said 'I want good lads. If the boys of the non-martial classes are desirable in every way and if they have got the spirit for a military career, I think in course of time they will be as good soldiers as anybody else', ibid., vol. VII, part I, p. 1.

81. Ibid., p. 41.

82. Ibid., vol. IX, p. 85.

83. Ibid., vol. X, p. 111.

84. Ibid., vol. II, p. 85.

85. Ibid., vol. X, p. 237.

86. Ibid., vol. VII, p. 170.

87. Ibid., vol. VII, part I, p. 5.

88. After this statement, Burdon asked 'You cannot remember a single case? Hogg replied, 'No, not even when handling camps of 3000 boys at a time', ibid. vol. I, pp. 124–5.

89. Ibid., vol. I, p. 53.

90. It was a grievance stated by many witnesses that those who could not make it to Sandhurst after the Prince of Wales College had no other post-school training opportunities open to them.

91. Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, vol. I, p. 15f, para. 14 lists how the channel of application (was) 'so rigidly official', and the instructions to selectors definitely implied that 'sons of soldiers (were) to be given preference'.

92. Ibid., vol. I, p. 55.

93. Ibid., p. 24.

94. Ibid., p. 20.

95. Ibid., p. 28.

96. Ibid., p. 21.

97. Ibid., p. 31.

98. Ibid., p. 32.

99. Ibid., pp. 32–3, esp. para. 28.

100. Ibid., pp. 33f, 36, 41 for the three points mentioned.

101. Ibid., VIII, p. 260

102. Ibid., vol. I, p. 46.

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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ISBN 019565805-1
9 780195 658057

Rs. 595